



# Long rabies fight seen

*Control of outbreak may take a year, officials say as cases rise; fox-hunting season shortened*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

Containing Svalbard's most severe outbreak of rabies in more than 30 years will be a prolonged fight that is continuing to place new limits on people's activities in the area, officials said this week.

Ten reindeer and three foxes have been di-

agnosed with the disease since the middle of September, said Espen Stokke, a senior advisor to Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø. Five more foxes are awaiting shipment to Oslo, possibly next week, for further analysis.

The last outbreak this severe was in 1980 and there have been no diagnosed cases since 1999, making it more difficult to predict how long the situation may last, Stokke said.

"It's hard to tell because we don't have too much experience with it on Svalbard," he said, noting factors such as the density and

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SYSSELMANNEN

An official with the Svalbard governor's office shoots a reindeer suspected of having rabies.

## Portrait of an artist and a gung-ho man



FRAMMUSEETS



POLARMUSEET I TROMSØ

The highbrow side of two famed polar explorers is being featured this week at Kunstpause as more than 2,400 pages of diaries from Roald Amundsen's 1911 South Pole expedition, above left, are being discussed at 8 p.m. Thursday at the Svalbard Museum. Copies of the diaries from 15 of the expedition members will also be available at the museum and Longyearbyen Library. Also be discussed at 7 p.m. Friday at the museum is art by Fridtjof Nansen, 150 years after his birth. Other activities highlighting the explorers' achievements, plus concerts, an outdoor market, art exhibits, movies and more are being featured through Sunday. The full schedule is at [www.kunstpause.no](http://www.kunstpause.no).

# Svalbard's sovereignty in question?

*Reports of challenges by EU, Russia dubious, minister says, but disputes about rules linger*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

Some nearby countries in the region may not be happy with certain governing policies in Svalbard, but none are seriously considering challenging Norway's sovereignty of the archipelago, officials said this week.

The possibility of a challenge by the European Union was raised by Diana Wallis, a European Parliament member, in an article published by *Aftenposten*. She stated the Svalbard

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# Seeking ghosts and glory

*Pyramiden as a top-10 ghost town and 'speed flying' hyped as trendy ways to see Svalbard*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

If loved ones are worried about your mortality in Svalbard due to polar bears and lethal cold, you can now do the trendy thing and say you're here for the ghosts and using skis to fly.

The archipelago, often revered by *National Geographic* for the exotic wildlife, is now being cherished by the magazine for death, in a

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The once-thriving mining town of Pyramiden is one of the top 10 ghost towns in the world, a new article in *National Geographic* declares.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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## Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

## Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.



# Coy, toy and soy for Loy

Youths with Longyearbyen's Thai community, above, bow demurely during a traditional dance Saturday for the annual Loy Krathong celebration at The University Centre in Svalbard. At top left, toys and candy are passed out at the entrance of the dining hall where hundreds of locals, bottom left, gathered for six hours of traditional feasting and entertainment. The holiday is a "festival of light" celebrated on the full moon night of the 12th lunar month. All photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.

## Icesheet

*Random bits of the week's weirdness:*

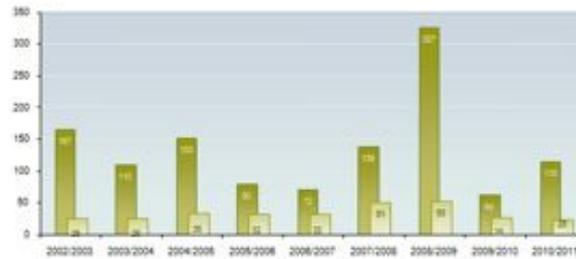
Eleven people have now been arrested in a recent Longyearbyen drug raid (plus two more in May) and the reaction of local residents is yet more proof we're hardly the bleeding heart liberal/socialist Hitler-indoctrinating types that hardcore conservatives in the outside world try to demean us as. Expelling drug offenders from Svalbard is favored by 86 percent of 1,015 voters in an online *Svalbardposten* poll, a serious zero-tolerance attitude especially since marijuana apparently is the narcotic of choice in this instance. Add that to mandatory guns in schools, a huge hunting population, a devout love of coal mining, low taxes, a work-not-welfare mandate and other stuff and it's a wonder Rupert Murdoch hasn't tried to relocate his beleaguered operation here ... That fishing dispute between Norway and Russia is admittedly getting ugly with salmon bans and threatened shootings adding to the foul stench, but

real journalists who've been around a lot longer than us are noting things have been worse – and not all that long ago. Six years ago, for instance, Russians kept Norwegian inspectors as "prisoners" on a trawler until reaching the border of their jurisdiction ... Speaking of dark moments, the folks at Philips got something of a slap in the face as an alarm clock with a bulb simulating a sunrise is indeed being prominently displayed at Svalbardbutikken as the dark season begins. Only instead of the Wake-Up Light that was the showpiece of a huge local giveaway and global marketing campaign by Philips last year it's a competing model that appears to have more features at less than half the price. Still, we'll continue to maintain that Philips, whose product got hammered with a "don't buy" recommendation by a consumer publication last Christmas, still has the best on-line multimedia show of Longyearbyen of any alarm clock manufacturer in the world.



SYSSELMANNEN

Harald Os, above left, and Espen Stokke take samples from a reindeer killed near Longyearbyen to be sent to Oslo to determine if it is infected with rabies. At right, figures from the Norwegian Polar Institute show poor Arctic fox pup production during the past year, which officials say is likely due to hunting quotas being too high.



SYSSELMANNEN

## Rabies shortens hunting season

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contact of animal populations are unknowns. "Within a year it may burn itself out."

Some contact may be reduced during the polar winter, but "in the spring you will find foxes trying to be everywhere to find territory," Stokke said.

The governor's office has taken what it calls "drastic" measures to contain the disease, which is frequently spread by bites and other contact, and is generally fatal to humans if not treated after symptoms appear. Dogs are not allowed outside unsupervised or without a leash, traps have been deployed around Longyearbyen to catch and kill as many foxes as possible, and vaccinations for a majority of Svalbard's residents were obtained.

Officials were also conducting frequent helicopter flights in the vicinity of Longyearbyen, Barentsburg and Svea to search for dead animals or those exhibiting unusual behavior, but Stokke said those ended last week because they are impractical during the dark season.

The newest restriction is a shortening of Arctic fox hunting season, which is scheduled

to begin Dec. 1 instead of the usual Nov. 1. Those applying for permits must show they have received a full set of rabies vaccination shots during the past five years. They must also participate in a safety course offered by the governor's office focusing on topics such as sanitary precautions and proper use of traps.

Many Longyearbyen residents have said they are taking proper precautions since the outbreak, but aren't panicked. Guri Tveito, chief environmental officer for the governor, said the same approach is sensible for hunting season.

"This is a very small risk because rabies is connected to bites from live foxes," she said.

Successful hunters must fulfill a usual requirement of turning foxes over to the Norwegian Polar Institute, which stores the animals in freezers of minus 80 degrees Celsius to kill a mouse parasite.

Online applications for permits, which must be submitted by Nov. 15, are available at [www.sysselmannen.no](http://www.sysselmannen.no).

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### A big climate of change for new director of Store Norske

Per Andersson, 54, will become the new administrative director of Store Norske on Jan. 1. Andersson, now plant manager for REC ScanCell in Narvik, worked for the company on a project in Singapore and has also worked for a weapons factory in Kongsberg. He said he has only made a short visit to Svalbard and Svea, but he looks forward to becoming acclimatized. "There is, after all, a certain difference between Singapore and Svalbard," he said. He succeeds Bjørn Arnesstad, who became administrative director in March of 2008.

### Airlift appeals exclusion from 2014 helicopter contract bid

Airlift is appealing a decision to exclude the company from those being considered for the new Svalbard governor's helicopter contract beginning in 2014. The company was among four submitting applications, but does not meet "certain financial criteria" set by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice, said Johnny Skoglund, Airlift's administrative director. He said the decision is a surprise since the company has been providing helicopter services since 1995 and "we expect a response to our appeal in a short time." The contract lasts until 2020.

### Ny-Ålesund fundraising trip violates rules, governor says

A flight for 14 people to Ny-Ålesund donated by Lufttransport for an annual fundraising auction is illegal sightseeing, according to the Svalbard governor's office. "It is ultimately an assessment of whether the flight itself is a major component of the gift, or (is) a regular carriage," wrote Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim in an e-mail to the company, adding because the flight is a primary part of the package it violates the rules prohibiting flightseeing trips to the research community. Oddny Kjerstad, chairman of the fundraiser, said legal alternatives are being sought for the trip, which sold for 20,000 kroner at last month's auction. He said the governor's office did not raise objections to a similar trip last year that sold for 17,000 kroner.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High -13C (-20C wind chill), low -19C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00p	Partly cloudy. SE winds to 15 km/h. High -10C (-17C wind chill), low -20C (-24C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Cloudy E winds to 15 km/h. High -15C (-23C wind chill), low -19C (-26C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Rain and snow. S winds to 31 km/h. High 3C (-2C wind chill), low -2C (-9C wind chill). Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, snow, -2C (-6C), -3C (-8C), light 0:00h; Monday, snow, -4C (-9C), -6C (-11C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, -5C (-11C), -6C (-12C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, snow, -6C (-12C), -8C (-16C), light 0:00h			

Data provided by yr.no



STIG HALVORSEN

A "speed flyer" descends a mountain with skis and a paraglider near Longyearbyen in this video posted on YouTube by Stig Halvorsen, who has been organizing and participating in the new sport for the past two years. The 14-minute video is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPOZeXVPJUg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPOZeXVPJUg).

## Ghosts and gliding lure visitors

### MORTALITY, from page 1

manner of speaking. The Russian settlement of Pyramiden is among the top 10 ghost towns in the world, according to an article published Thursday.

"This Arctic coal-mining town, owned by the U.S.S.R. since 1927, was an ideal Soviet settlement complete with workers' barracks, a sports center, and a bust of Lenin," notes the article, which places Pyramiden seventh on the list. "The mine is now exhausted, but the buildings, including a library full of books, a theater, and a music hall with the world's northernmost grand piano, have been left as they were when the town was abandoned in 1998."

More than 1,000 people lived in Pyramiden at its peak, but mining operations slowed and then ceased abruptly.

"It looks like somebody just said 'Let's get up and go,'" said Kjersti Noras, manager of Svalbard Tourism. "There's cups and plates on the tables."

She said summer boat tours and winter snowmobile expeditions to the settlement are among the most popular tourist activities in Svalbard, but her office hasn't received any extra inquiries since the article was published.

## Norway's rule of Svalbard raises ire

### DISUNION, from page 1

Treaty, giving Norway sovereignty but opening the area for non-military activity by other nations, needs updating and possibly significant changes.

The report was followed by another suggesting Russia is challenging Svalbard's sovereignty after numerous trawlers were recently detained by Norwegian inspectors for alleged fish and dumping violation. Russian officials and fishermen have stated Norway is exceeding its authority in international waters, and one minor party Russian politician earned international headlines by suggesting trawlers be armed and allowed to fire upon Norwegian inspectors attempting to board in the future.

For those interested in a vacation that's, um, not about death, a new trend is also being highlighted as a reason to visit Svalbard.

A YouTube video of people "speed flying" down – and above – the mountains surrounding Longyearbyen is getting attention from NRK and other media. Local organizers say interest has skyrocketed during the past year or so in the skiing/paragliding sport that originated in alpine countries such as France.

Stig Halvorsen, who shot the video and is manager of Sportscenteret, said Svalbard's mountains aren't as large as the Alps, with a decent typically taking two to four minutes at speeds of up to 130 kilometers an hour. But he said the scenery is more pristine and – despite the polar bears – it's probably safer.

"We have no trees," he said. "All the surrounding are clear before you start."

The video hasn't quite gone viral with about 8,000 views as of this week, but it's obviously being seen by more than just Halvorsen's family and friends.

He said speed flying instruction courses are expected to be offered next spring in cooperation with Basecamp.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

The possibility of a serious challenge by the EU was dismissed by officials with the organization and Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

"I'm sure that *Aftenposten* is aware that this publication does not express the EU's position," wrote János Herman, EU ambassador to Norway, in a letter published by the newspaper Thursday. "I was surprised, therefore, to read the headline 'EU pressure on Svalbard.'"

Russia, while also apparently not seriously considering a challenge, has taken several recent action such as banning imports of Norwegian salmon.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## What's up

### Nov. 2-6

Kunstpause. Schedule and details at [www.kunstpause.no](http://www.kunstpause.no).

### Nov. 5

Midnight: Movie: "The Thing," U.S. sci-fi/horror, ages 15 and up. Special half-price showing, admission 40 kr. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 6

4 p.m.: Movie: "Kidnapped," Danish family/action, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

6 p.m.: Movie: "What's Your Number?" U.S. comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Tropa de Elite: O Inimigo Agora É Outro," Brazilians action/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 8

7 p.m.: Municipal Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### Nov. 13

6 p.m.: Movie: "Friends With Benefits," U.S. comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Das Lied in Mir," Thai drama, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 16

6 p.m.: Movie: "Footloose," U.S. drama/comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 17

2 p.m.: Board of Culture and Leisure Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

6 p.m.: Bydrift board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### Nov. 18

9 a.m.: Board of Growing Enterprises Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Blåfjell 2 - Jakten på det Magiske Horn," (3D) Norwegian fantasy/family, all ages. First Norwegian movie produced in 3D. All ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 1," U.S. fantasy/drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

## What's online

**Icepeople.net** provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *China denies hacking into SvalSat*
- *Biggest jump ever in greenhouse gases*
- *Polar bear migration streams on webcam*
- *Arctic garbage delivered to Arkhangelsk*