

## Abstracts / Friday, 7 December

### ANIMALS-TRAINERS-VETERINARIANS: AN INDISPENSABLE TRIO! WHERE DO WE COME FROM AND WHERE DO WE GO?

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'Husbandry behaviors' – 'medical training' – 'voluntary health care', all terms that have become a common language, a common fact. This voluntary work with the animal was developed to diminish the constraints of capturing for a health control, to alleviate the stress during handling as well as the risks for people and animals involved. It has become integrated in the training program of many institutions.

It was at Marine Studios in Florida that dolphins were trained for the first time, about 80 years ago – and soon dolphin care-takers realized that if they could train their dolphins for amazing performances they could also use the principles of operant conditioning to desensitize and prepare them for their medical controls, with as result the first voluntary blood samples collected in the mid-1960s.

The collaboration between veterinarians and caretakers has evolved tremendously over the years, not having always been the swiftest ever, to a great relation nowadays. Indeed, the importance of the trainers work is paramount for the success of medical training. Without them and the relation they have with the animals they take care of there is no voluntary participation of the animals, no early detection of pathology, no correct follow-up of their health controls, or no access for medical research for example. It is also very important for the veterinarians to develop a trust relationship and communicate with the trainers as it will help them understand the disease or problem at hand, its effects and consequences, assess the best approach for some medical behaviors, or help define the correct administration of treatments.

The good relationship between animals, trainers, and veterinarians can often make the difference between success or failure.

This presentation will review the classical husbandry behaviors, why they are important, what they bring as information, and how, through their practical aspect and the medical advantage gained, they fit in the big picture. It will also present the evolution over the years of what one once thought was not possible and is now part of the regular control, the advances made in medical research, and disease prevention in marine mammals but also some of the most amazing medical behaviors obtained in recent years – all these for the best interest and benefit of the animals under our care.