



Formal Presentation Abstracts
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**BLOOD SAMPLING IN PINNIPEDS BY VOLUNTARY BEHAVIOR:
THE DIFFERENT STEPS**

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Voluntary medical behaviors have been integrated into the training programs of many institutions housing marine mammals. This training eases the animals, diminishing stress during handling and reducing the risks of staff members being injured. Blood sampling is one of these trained behaviors. While not the easiest to train, it is one of major importance since a blood sample is kind of the mirror of the body. If you have a trained animal, it will only take a few minutes to collect a blood sample. Although most dolphins are trained for voluntary blood collection, it is a behavior rarely trained in pinnipeds. The reasons are that pinnipeds are more aggressive, are healthier, and may be less charismatic than dolphins. Therefore less time is allotted for their husbandry training. It is my personal experience that when an animal is not trained and difficult to collect a blood sample from, quite often the sample is not collected when a healthy, control sample is necessary. It is only collected when the animal is already sick or when it is "too late." This is why attention should be given to training voluntary blood sampling in pinnipeds. In this presentation, I will review the different blood sampling methods and the different steps taken to train voluntary blood sampling in a variety of pinniped species using both direct and protected contact.