



## Formal Presentation Abstracts Friday, 22. October 2004

### **ENERGY REQUIREMENTS, DIGESTION AND BEHAVIOR OF SOUTH AFRICAN FUR SEALS IN A ZOOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT**

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Any professional management program for marine mammals in human care should employ a strong and rigorous monitoring and management of the diet of each specimen and the effects of the diet on weight, behavior, and clinical condition.

This study focused on the feeding specifications of 5.2.0 adult and 3.0.0 juvenile South African fur seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus pusillus*) housed at Zoomarine in southern Portugal. The caloric content of each species used in diets (subclass Teleostei and class Cephalopoda) was determined and correlated to the behavior and general condition of each zoological specimen. This included effects on body weight and behavior, in correlation with their ages and weight.

In the case of three adult males, the digestion interval for each species used in the diets was also tested through radioactive spheres for radiographic visualization.

This study allowed a more profound understanding of the importance of different caloric content of the specific species of fish and cephalopods used in the diet of the fur seals. It also showed the relevance of diet planning through caloric references towards a high quality husbandry plan and the general welfare of zoological specimens.

### **THE ART AND SCIENCE OF TEACHING OLD DOLPHINS NEW TRICKS**

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Over the past 2 decades, tremendous advancement has been seen in the area of medical care for the animals in both zoos and aquariums. As a result, it is not uncommon to encounter animals in controlled environments that are at the upper end of their life expectancy. Many facilities have found that in addition to specialized medical care for these older animals, specialized behavioral care is also required in order to optimize the well-being of these animals.

During the past few years, we have had the opportunity to work with several older animals at various facilities that have provided specific training challenges. There seemed to be a pattern to the challenges that we encountered with these older animals, regardless of the species or the type of environment in which they were housed.

By recognizing the pattern and formulating a specific training plan for these older animals, a significant increase in behavioral control has been consistently observed in these animals.

We have found that while learning in older animals does seemingly tend to be a slower process, with a training program that has been properly adjusted, even older animals can be an extremely reliable component of a facility's training program.

