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HUSBANDRY TRAINING FOR ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION, PERFORMED UNDER CONTROLLED BEHAVIOR ON A FEMALE BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*TURSIOPS TRUNCATUS*), AT ZOOMARINE, PORTUGAL

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On 26 September 2005, a successful artificial insemination was performed on Cher, a 37-year-old female bottlenose dolphin, under voluntary training, for the first time worldwide. The procedure took 20 minutes. To achieve the specific goal of intrauterine introduction of the frozen semen, a training program was implemented for a period of three months, with 2 to 3 weekly sessions. Nevertheless, this procedure required much more than just the training of this particular behavior. It involved desensitization for repetitive voluntary collection samples of urine, blood, as well as ultrasound examination, conducted in a very well established schedule. All of these were necessary for the success of this important objective. Furthermore, our team also trained two other females.

Simultaneously, and aiming at cryopreservation, our team trained three bottlenose dolphin males (one of whom is 46 years old, hence the oldest male under human care) for semen collection.

In terms of breeding purposes of cetacean populations under human care, this type of husbandry training may play a paramount role for the maintenance of adequate genetic stocks, without compromising the wellbeing and life quality of the specimens.

