



Formal Presentation Abstracts



MEDICAL TRAINING IN MARINE MAMMALS: UPDATE AND ADVANTAGES

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For many working with marine mammals, medical training has nearly become a common language and common fact. It has become integrated in the training program of many institutions, but unfortunately not of all, yet. If one is new in the field and wants to read more about this, the written information is quite scarce. Medical training is mentioned in some articles, not as the main subject but as a tool, normal for some institutions for a treatment or a research program which then is the main subject. Medical training was developed in the beginning to ease the contention of those animals; to diminish the stress during handling as well as the risks of being hurt for the people involved. Veterinarians started then to have the possibility of practicing preventive medicine, which is of major importance for those animals. This means also that the veterinarian must establish teamwork with the trainers. They must communicate actively and daily so that the trainers can play an important role in identifying the first and early symptoms of diseases: a behavioral change. Working together also helps in gathering medical samples since the veterinarian knows what he/she would like to have, but it is still the trainer who will train the animal. In this presentation, routine and basic examinations, including physical control and blowhole, gastric, feces and blood samples in cetaceans and pinnipeds, will be shown and their medical interest explained. Ultrasound check-up, which is now used for more than gestation control and fetus growth, will also be discussed. The training of those medical behaviors makes the base of a good preventative medicine program in an institution. But some institutions have already seen that it is possible to even go further in medical training, and although voluntary endoscopy, cystoscopy, etc. are not commonly trained behaviors, one knows now that it is also possible to train and desensitize the animals for more specific medical analysis.

SOCIAL ASPECTS IN A REUNION OF RELATED FEMALE BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS AT BROOKFIELD ZOO

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Close and persistent relationships among matrilineally related females is a prominent feature of wild bottlenose dolphin societies. To mimic this social structure, three related females were reunited at the Chicago Zoological Society's Brookfield Zoo: an 8-year-old female was reintroduced to her 29-year old mother and 5-year-old sister after a four-year separation. We conducted quantitative behavioral observations to document changes in the females' relationships during the two-week period of the reunion and during a follow-up period two years later. During the reunion, the mother spent substantial time with each daughter but the sisters were rarely together unless their mother was present. The mother commonly had affiliative interactions with each daughter involving prolonged gentle contact, whereas friendly encounters between the sisters were uncommon and typically brief or without contact. Rates of agonism were initially high between the reunited sisters but decreased rapidly. A close relationship between the two sisters was not observed until the follow-up period two years later.