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7th September 2011

Dear Mr Lim

Thank you for your response to our coalition letter on 22nd August 2011. We would again like to respond to some of the points you raise.

In your response of 22nd August you mention two “independent” papers documenting the positive audience impact of viewing dolphins in shows or interactive programs. Sweeney (2009) is a Ph.D. dissertation from the University of California, San Diego. This dissertation has not been published in the peer-reviewed literature. In her abstract Sweeney says that people retained “long-lasting memories of the experience”, but this does not confirm that people remember facts or perform conservation-related behaviors originally inspired by the experience.

Miller (2009) is also a Ph.D. dissertation, from the University of Mississippi, and it has also not been published in the peer-reviewed literature. This dissertation only studied people three months beyond their experience at a dolphinarium, which is insufficient time to study retention.

Dr Stan Kuczaj at the University of Mississippi has previously published work that provides supporting arguments for captive display and captive research. Dr Kuczaj recently edited a two-volume special issue of the International Journal of Comparative Psychology, which you cite in your response, which had the stated goal of rebutting The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity, The HSUS/WSPA’s white paper against public display.

This volume contained a paper by Hill and Lackups (2010) that analyzed the scientific literature to determine the degree to which captive research with marine mammals was contributing to our understanding of, as you stated, “*dolphin perceptual and cognitive abilities, dolphin communication, dolphin physiology and reproduction as well as dolphin social behaviour.*” However, the paper concluded that “[u]nfortunately, some very important topics have been *grossly under-represented* (e.g., cognition, development, calf survival, social structure, and conservation)” (p. 435, emphasis added) in captive marine mammal research. In short, captive research is lagging well behind research in the wild when it comes to improving our knowledge of these important topics.

In addition, this same paper noted that “Research in captivity involves overcoming many competing demands (e.g., availability of animals, training time, and monetary support) and working within the goals of the facility (e.g., education, animal interaction, and entertainment)...[which] pose major obstacles for researchers interested in captive populations and make experimental paradigms very challenging” (p. 434, emphasis added). Therefore your claim that research on dolphins in public display facilities “*has been and continues to be instrumental in increasing our understanding of dolphin biology*” is in fact not strongly supported by the publication record.

You also say “*Such valuable information yielded, especially via long-term studies, would have been impossible to achieve for those marine mammals living in the wild.*” This statement is not true. Long-term studies have been conducted on numerous species in the wild and have yielded virtually everything we know about natural social behavior in these species (see, for example, Mann *et al.* 2000). The Kuczaj special issue also supports this point.

Your response refers to “*stringent international regulations*” regarding care and maintenance of captive cetaceans. Such regulations do not exist. Where regulations do exist, they are domestic and governed by local law – there are no international treaties that govern the care and maintenance of wildlife in captivity. The only international regulations which do exist are that governing international wildlife transportation.

You mention the threats facing wild dolphins and suggest that captive dolphins are safe from these threats and therefore thrive. This ignores the fact that some of the dolphins intended for your facility have in fact died while in human care. If these dolphins were protected from the threats facing wild dolphins at the time of their death, please explain why the dolphins died and clarify that these deaths had nothing to do with being in captivity.

In our letter dated 6th August we requested references to support your statement that “*dolphins thrive in marine parks.*” We still await these references to the scientific literature on this topic.

On behalf of all of our members globally, we repeat our appeal for you to release these dolphins back into their natural habitat and to commit to not capturing any cetaceans from the wild for display at Resorts World Sentosa in the future.

Sent on behalf of the following organisations:

- Animal Guardians
- Animal People
- Animals Asia Foundation
- Animal Concerns Research & Education Society
- Humane Society International
- International Animal Rescue
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (UK)
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Hong Kong
- World Society for the Protection of Animals

Please respond to David Neale, Animal Welfare Director, Animals Asia Foundation, 10/F, Kai Tak Commercial Building 317-319 Des Voeux Road, Central, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
dneale@animalsasia.org

References

Hill, H. and Lackups, M. 2010. Journal publication trends regarding cetaceans found in both wild and captive environments: What do we study and where do we publish? *International Journal of Comparative Psychology* 23: 414-534.

Mann, J., Connor, R.C., Tyack, P.L. and Whitehead, H. (eds) 2000. *Cetacean Societies: Field Studies of Dolphins and Whales*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 433 pp.

Copied to:

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