

Editorial, News and Views

This issue of *Aquatic Mammals* is published on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the keeping of Cetaceans in Duisburg Zoo and I hasten to offer them our congratulations for their efforts over the years and best wishes for a long continuance of their successes. The Aquatic Mammals exhibited there have comprised, as well as a good collection of seals, otters, sealions and polar bears, six species of Cetaceans and the article on page 53 of this issue, in summarizing their efforts to keep Commerson's Dolphins, spells out quite clearly to those who are not aware of it, their dedication to the well being of all the animals in their collection. Good Luck Duisburg!

Concern about the Seal Plague still rumbles on. In the *Veterinary Record* of 5 May, a summary is presented of the course of the disease outbreak in Harbour Seals in Norway in 1988 and 1989 and confirms that this formed a part of the seal distemper epizootic in North Western Europe. In the number of the same Journal for 27 January, Dr John Baker extols the virtues of a Tiletamine-Zolazepam mixture for the immobilization of wild grey and southern elephant seals, and found it in his experience a safe and reliable mixture.

The Biologist for February 1990 (the journal of the Institute of Biology) contains an article by John Harwood of the Sea Mammal Research Unit reviewing the lessons learnt from the 1988 seal epidemic. He summarizes the progress of the disease and concludes that 'disease outbreaks, even though they are rare events, can be important factors regulating the numbers of large vertebrates'. He goes on to argue for the establishment of a network of scientists, ready to respond quickly if another epizootic occurs.

Continuing concern about the use of Gillnets and the consequent losses of dolphin trapped therein, is shown by the organization of an International Conference on the Mortality of Cetaceans in passive fishing nets and traps on 20 to 25 October in La Jolla. Further details may be obtained from:

Gillnet Conference,
PO Box 271,
La Jolla,
California 92038, USA.

On the same subject, The Society for Marine Mammalogy passed a resolution which says:

'Large-scale pelagic drift nets indiscriminately kill large numbers of marine mammals and other non-target species. The Society for Marine Mammalogy calls for a ban on the use of large-scale pelagic drift nets. The Society also stresses the urgent need for collation of data on the effects of such drift nets on marine mammals and encourages the development of alternative fishing techniques which are selective for target species'.

Such a resolution surely needs the support of all of us, and our united pressures to our individual Government Departments to bring such a ban about. A question on this basis has already been raised in the UK Parliament. Concern was also expressed in the same place by subsequent questions to the appropriate Minister, who said in reply that he was unaware of any evidence to suggest that echolocators or side scanners on ships have adverse effects on dolphin behaviour—perhaps we should inform him! It was also noted in the British Parliament that the 'new' standards for dolphinarium in the UK are still in draft form, awaiting comments from 'the appropriate bodies'. This over one year after their publication! He further commented that only one operator had submitted details of his plans for their implementation at his establishment. (Meanwhile the EEC standards may overtake the implementation of the UK ones—Ed.)

At the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians, Michael T. Walsh, of Sea World of Florida, Orlando, gave a paper on clinical evaluation and treatment of Cetacean species, including a range of normal blood values. Jim McBain gave a similar evaluation for Pinnipeds—without the figures.

The Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine, Vol. 21, No. 1, which is the Aquatic Animal Medicine issue, contains an interesting review of Caliciviruses in 12 species of marine mammals, an article on the anatomy of the sea otter and one on a physical restraining device for the same, the ultrastructural morphology of the Bowhead whale, baseline circulating levels of vitamin E, cholesterol and selected minerals in both captive and wild Beluga, the use of an enzyme immunoassay to determine progesterone status in the Bottle Nose dolphin, attempted treatment of cutaneous mycobacteriosis in a Harbour Seal, clinical signs of San Miguel Sea Lion virus in California Sea Lions, acute necrotizing enteritis with a coronavirus in Harbour Seals, endocarditis in a Sea Otter and a report of an invasive carcinoma in a California Sea Lion.

Marine Mammal Science, Vol. 6, No. 1, contains articles on sex determination of the California Sea Lion from canine teeth (there is, perhaps surprisingly, a statistically significant difference between the sizes of the

teeth of **each sex of a similar age**), a detailed paper on the determination of optimum sustainable population levels (very important for any species management) and papers on group types of Southern Right Whales, a dolphin-human fishing cooperative in Brazil, the first recorded occurrences of Blainville's beaked whale in the South Eastern Pacific and a pygmy killer whale in the South West Atlantic, measurements of Weddell Seals and fatty acids in the fur seal.

The Pilot, No. 4—Newsletter of the Marine Mammal Action Plan—highlights the continuing pressures on whales by slaughtering them for meat as well as the previously mentioned pressures on small cetacea due to gillnet fishing. It also commented on the tragic aftermath of the *Exxon Valdes* oil spill—which is further documented in the *IAAAM News*. Losses, as reported by the US Fish and Wildlife Service up to 21 September 1989, totalled:

36 429 birds and
1010 sea otters plus

827 birds and 215 otters that were in, or had been in, rehabilitation facilities.

The Siren, No. 42—journal of UNEP's Oceans and Coastal Areas Programmes also majors on oil spills worldwide and how they can be avoided in the future.

The meeting at Tadoussac (see *Aq Mamm.* 16.1) on the future of the Beluga has yielded worthwhile interim results—if the reports in the February 1990 issue of the journal 'Beluga' are to be believed. Adoption of individual animals and major pressures to create marine parks around the St Lawrence river are all achieving fairly quick results and increased interest in the conservation of this species.

Finally, I am delighted to report that, following the meeting in Europe of the International Marine Animal Trainers Association, an increasing number of their members are subscribing to, and hopefully reading, this journal. As I have often said in the past, the more subscribers we can encourage to join us, the longer we can keep the price of production down and even, hopefully, reduce the subscription rates further—to the benefit of all.

Readers might like to be reminded that the 1991 meeting of the European Association for Aquatic Mammals is scheduled to be held in Riccione, Italy, on either the weekend of 10 or 17 March. Full details and the dates, when agreed, may be obtained from the undersigned.

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