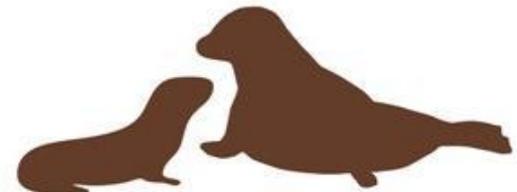


Contribution from biologists to seal pup rehabilitation practices

Workshop SMM
Dunedin, December 11 2012



SEAL
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Tara Seal Research

Intervention - or 'rehabilitation' in the case of pinniped pups is widely practiced globally

- This usually happens when the pup is considered to be 'outside its survival envelope'

or

- When intervention is hoped to improve survival potential (Hawaiian monk seal)

Where biologists design such intervention practices, existing knowledge of the natural development of behaviour of the species is taken into consideration and the intervention may be carefully tailored to fit closely to the natural behaviour, and also to take account of the species or population status

This discussion will include in particular cases of intervention with pups of : -

- Cape fur seal (*least concern* – IUCN)
- Steller sea lion (*endangered*)
- Californian sea lion (*least concern*)

- Hawaiian monk seal (*critically endangered*)
- Saimaa ringed seal (*critically endangered*)
- Ladoga and Baltic ringed seals (both *vulnerable*)
- Baltic grey seal (*endangered*)
- Harbour seal (*least concern*)

Recognised issues which have arisen in the course of intervention with pups of these species have included:

- Individual cases of imprinting on human carers (SSL, HMS, MedMS)
- Slowness to recognise live fish as prey after rearing on dead fish (Pv)
- Wider dispersal after release than usual in wild pups (Pv)

Biologists working to overcome issues as they become recognised –

Issues of tailoring rehab to natural development most critical during the sensitive periods of early ontogeny – i.e. with ‘orphan’ pups of pre-weaning age.

	‘orphans’	Post-weaning
Primary socialisation (w/M)		
Experience of integrating with colony		
Exploration of marine environment		
Geographical orientation - ‘fix’ on natal site		

Research may help to overcome developmental deficits in orphan pups

