



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

THE CARE AND USE OF MARINE MAMMALS

DATE OF PUBLICATION: December 2016

The following is a selection of frequently asked questions (and their respective answers) concerning the *CCAC guidelines on: the care and use of marine mammals* (2014).

1. WHY ARE GUIDELINES NECESSARY FOR MARINE MAMMALS IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS?

While not common, marine mammals may be involved in research or education in Canada. Animal care committees are responsible for considering the well-being of any animals in their institution and balancing that with the potential benefits to be gained from their involvement in animal-based research or teaching. This document provides guidance on the facilities and practices that need to be in place if marine mammals are to be held.

2. WHY DON'T THE GUIDELINES DEFINE MINIMUM POOL SIZES?

The subcommittee evaluated the available evidence for defining pool sizes and concluded that:

- there is little consensus on minimum pool sizes internationally, and most of the current standards are based on mathematical equations that may not reflect the biological needs of the marine mammal species; and
- the volume of space required to provide satisfactory housing for animals may vary depending on the quality of the animal's environment.

3. HOW DO THE GUIDELINES ADDRESS THE POTENTIAL FOR DISEASE TRANSMISSION AMONG CAPTIVE ANIMALS, AND BETWEEN CAPTIVE ANIMALS AND WILD ANIMALS?

The guidelines require that each institution have the ability to quarantine newly-acquired animals and isolate, for medical reasons, any marine mammal housed in the institution. Specific elements of the quarantine program are identified, as well as disease surveillance, examinations of the marine mammals, and the importance of keeping medical records.

The guidelines note that release of marine mammals may place wild populations at risk. References are provided for more information on these risks: *IUCN Position Statement on Translocation of Living Organisms* (IUCN, 1987); and *Marine mammals and "wildlife rehabilitation" programs* (Measures, 2004).



4. WHY IS CAPTURE OF MARINE MAMMALS INCLUDED IN THE GUIDELINES?

Acquisition of animals is covered in all animal-based CCAC guidelines, such as the guidelines on farm animals, fish and wildlife. In the case of marine mammals, capture is a component of acquisition. However, the guidelines state upfront that capture from the wild should only occur in exceptional circumstances, and that an institution planning to acquire a new marine mammal should make all efforts to acquire the animal from existing captive populations.

5. CAN MARINE MAMMALS BE TRANSPORTED SAFELY?

Although challenging, transportation of marine mammals is sometimes necessary and can be performed successfully when there is a comprehensive transportation plan, the animals are fit for transport, care is provided for the animals immediately prior to and during the transportation process, and the marine mammal is accompanied by one or more attendants who are competent and knowledgeable in the transportation of that species.

6. ARE ALL ASPECTS OF HUSBANDRY ADDRESSED IN THE GUIDELINES?

The guidelines lay out the basic principles for husbandry of marine mammals. There is a wide variety of marine mammal species, so it is impossible to address all the species-specific needs in a single document. Institutions housing marine mammals need to develop considerable expertise in caring for the animals in advance of bringing them into the research/educational institution.

7. DO INSTITUTIONS HOUSING MARINE MAMMALS NEED TO HAVE A VETERINARIAN SPECIALIZING IN MARINE MAMMAL MEDICINE ON STAFF?

The subcommittee was aware that there are few veterinarians with training in marine mammal medicine, and it is therefore recommended that where the attending veterinarian does not have specific expertise and/or training, other experts should be consulted, including marine mammal biologists.