



## European Association for Aquatic Mammals



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Dear Colleague,

I have recently heard from a member of ours - Martin Huigen from Munster - about the problems you are experiencing regarding the future of the Killer Whale you found stranded on the Samborombon Bay beach at the end of November 1992. While not willing to comment on individual cases of non-members of our Association, I can state categorically that the release of captive Cetacea to the wild poses enormous problems and is seldom successful in the long term, even after massive efforts involving large sums of money. Learning from the Atlantis experience in Australia has taught us that the welfare of captive animals is best addressed in the facilities to which they have become accustomed. That is why the decision has been reached with the Barcelona Killer Whale that she should be transported to join other captive animals in the States rather than released to an uncertain fate in the open sea.

As you know Killer Whales live in pods who each have their own 'language' learnt from calfhood. To release animals outside this closely knit grouping would be similar to incarcerating you or me in a culture strange to us with a different language and one where the residents are not keen or willing to assist us in any way. However even if the pod from which this animal had come could be identified (a very dubious possibility) then there is no proof that your animal would be able to support himself on live fish. Evidence from the wild of released captive animals shows in most cases (and all those closely monitored) that failure results in the death of the animal unless it be caught again and returned to captivity.

In the absence therefore of any concrete evidence to the contrary, the present advice is not to consider release into the wild if the welfare of the animal concerned is to be considered.

Yours sincerely,

*Victor Allen*

release, and everything to lose.

Most qualified professionals that have had considerable experience with cetaceans would also agree than a release attempt would be inadvisable. Field biologists have little or no hands-on experience, but this is not the case with oceanarium professionals because they are the ones that have to do all the work, and are most aware of how complicated a procedure this is.

If you wish additional professional opinions on this, may I suggest that you contact Dr. Lanny Cornell (2437 Singing Trails Court, El Cajon, California, 92021), Dr. Joe Jehl (Hubbs/Sea World Research Institute, San Diego), Dr. Steve Leatherwood (P.O. Box 1090, Solana Beach, California, 92075), Dr. Bill Braker (Director, Shedd Aquarium, 1200 South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois, 60605), Dr. Lou Herman in Hawaii, or Brad Andrews and Drs. Mike Walsh and Dan Odell at Sea World in Orlando, Florida. If you require additional experts, let me know, and I will provide more.

Thank you for appraising me of this situation, and I hope that reason ultimately prevails, and that the rehabilitated beached male killer whale will live a long and productive life at Mundo Marino with the female that is a long time resident there. If you require additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Very sincerely yours,

*Annelle S. Odell*