

May 5, 2009

NEWS UPDATE: Harbour Porpoise “Daisy” Still Languishing In Isolation



After two months of the Liferforce “Free Daisy” campaign a Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) spokesperson, Paul Cottrell (604-666-9965), has finally talked to Liferforce. He said that they have yet to finalize the fate of Daisy. He said that they haven’t determined the “facility” but did not rule out that it could be a sea pen.

In December 2007 the Vancouver Aquarium deemed this Harbour porpoise to be healthy. However instead of being rehabbed for released she has since languished in which is basically an isolation tank. Although it was Daisy who fought to survive the rescue in August 2007 near Victoria is praiseworthy but now it is cruel and inhumane treatment. Her prison is an approx. 4’ shallow pool that is only approx. 10’ in diameter. The temporary treatment pool has caused Daisy psychological and physical harm.

On March 1, 2009 Liferforce urged DFO MINISTER Gail Shea to:

1. Reintroduce her to eat live fish while preparing to move her.
2. Move her into a large sea pen to reintroduce her to her natural environment. This would improve muscle tone and diving capabilities etc.. When she has acclimatized the sea pen gate would be opened when other Harbour porpoises are in the area at the Vancouver Aquarium research station on Popham Island. The gate would be left open to give her a choice to return. (See Open Letter <http://www.liferforcefoundation.org/files/FreetheHarbourPorpoise.pdf> and See Free Daisy Video http://www.liferforcefoundation.org/ecotv_play.php?id=37)

On May 1, 2009 Liferforce wrote to the Vancouver Aquarium’s veterinarian proposing that Daisy be immediately removed to a sea pen at their research station for a study of porpoise behaviour, rehabilitation and release. Daisy could provide rehabbers and others with a greater insight into Harbour porpoise behaviour and more data about releasing marine mammals. This is consistent with their goals to use “untapped resources” such as the “Greater Use of Rehabilitation and Display Animals” for research (Marine Mammals in the Lab: Tools for Conservation and Science, September 2007). Most importantly Daisy would be treated more humanely. Failure to do so will lose a rare chance for Daisy and science itself.

This porpoise is a fighter. She has beaten the odds to survive and be free. She is a good candidate for release options. It was once a “fact” that if a human touches a seal pup the mom would not take her back. However this was proven to be incorrect. The Vancouver Aquariums has made many mistakes (see the new Liferforce video “Rehab 101” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONDN0I2qwSk>). There are still many other unknowns about other marine species. It is not a proven scientific fact that a young porpoise cannot be rehabbed for release. It is not a proven fact that she is better off in captivity and captivity would not kill her. There are examples of successful Harbour porpoise releases.

Liferforce hopes that there is still time to do what is right for her and to give her a chance at freedom. Please continue to write to: The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans - Shea.G@parl.gc.ca

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