



Mr. Gerald Dick
Executive Director
WAZA
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February 24, 2010

JAZA Dolphin Management Protocol

Dear Mr. Dick:

I write on behalf of WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and the undersigned organizations representing millions of members and constituents worldwide. We write to share our concerns regarding the establishment of a new dolphin management policy by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (WAZA) member association the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums (JAZA), in response to continuing worldwide condemnation of the dolphin drive hunts in Japan and acquisition of live dolphins from these hunts for captive display.

This new protocol suggests that animals will not be taken from the Taiji drive hunts but from a separate 'herding exercise' as a means of acquisition of wild dolphins for aquariums, and that more humane methods would reportedly be developed for these additional captures.

As you know, our groups have been in dialogue with WAZA and other zoo associations for many years regarding the sourcing of dolphins from these hunts by member facilities. Although we acknowledge the earnest efforts of WAZA to address these hunts with the goal of maintaining a dialogue with JAZA, and considering the complexities associated with these hunts, we are disappointed that WAZA has chosen to endorse a policy that encourages live captures of dolphins in Japanese waters. Small cetacean populations in these waters face numerous anthropogenic threats, not the least of which are directed coastal and pelagic hunts that take nearly 23,000 whales and dolphins annually.

We maintain that high prices paid for live bottlenose dolphins are a powerful incentive to continue these hunts in Taiji, and have provided documentation to WAZA and other institutions substantiating this fact. However, the demand for live dolphins comes not just from Japan, but is international in nature. As well as selling dolphins to Japanese facilities, Taiji has supplied facilities in Dubai, South Korea, China, Iran, Palau, the Philippines and Turkey.

Although JAZA's new policy may be portrayed as a step forward in addressing one element of the hunts (acquisition of live dolphins for captivity), we believe this policy will actually undermine dolphin protection in Japan. And because there is no enforcement or monitoring capability within WAZA, or JAZA for that matter, we believe this policy has more to do with providing public relations cover for WAZA by diverting focus away from Taiji and its dolphin slaughter.

Promoting live captures without population assessments may threaten local populations

Small cetacean populations around Japan are already negatively affected by an annual take of over 23,000 animals. Encouraging additional pressure on local populations through live capture is irresponsible in the face of non-existent population data. Furthermore, although the WAZA November 2009 newsletter indicates that this policy has been in place for several months, there is no evidence that it has resulted in reduction in the hunts at Taiji this season. The hunts, killing and selections for captivity continue unabated. We would like to know if WAZA is aware of any additional live captures occurring, where they have occurred and whether the populations being targeted are different from the populations being targeted in Taiji.

International trade and pressure from captive facilities are not localized or discrete

Live captures of dolphins continue around the world in regions where very little is known about the status of populations. For smaller populations, live capture operations are a significant conservation concern. The removal of animals, particularly when captures target a specific sex or age group, can have an impact on the viability of the wild population when that population is small and has a limited distribution. The IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group (CSG) has stated that live capture is equivalent to killing: “*Removal of live cetaceans from the wild, for captive display and/or research, is equivalent to incidental or deliberate killing, as the animals brought into captivity (or killed during capture operations) are no longer available to help maintain their populations*” and “[w]hen unmanaged and undertaken without a rigorous program of research and monitoring, live-capture can become a serious threat to local cetacean populations”.¹

Additional hunts will be difficult to monitor and enforce

The killing is unlikely to stop in Taiji, whether or not JAZA implements its new policy, as it will probably continue to be subsidized by brokers for international facilities and facilities in Japan that are not members of JAZA. Whether other WAZA facilities are currently involved in this trade is unknown. It is important to determine whether the sale of live dolphins is primarily to Japanese facilities, where dolphins are perhaps worth less because they are considered expendable and in ready supply, and where shipment is across shorter distances, rather than to higher profile international facilities. Because drive hunts are a consistent and ‘easier’ source of dolphins, any compliance with the new JAZA policy, whether complete or partial, by Japanese facilities will be meaningless in the face of continuing demand by non-JAZA facilities. Furthermore, there is nothing to stop an outside broker from continuing to buy from the hunts in Taiji as an easy source, and passing them off as caught elsewhere, even within Japan.

Most capture methods are inherently inhumane

Mortality risk in bottlenose dolphins increases six-fold after a capture from the wild and takes about a month to return to normal levels.² Stress, sometimes fatal, is an acknowledged threat even using the method considered most humane by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (purse seine netting). The NMFS acknowledged that “animals removed from the wild for permanent maintenance in captivity often represent only a proportion of the total take during a live capture operation.” In promoting live captures elsewhere in Japan, WAZA is merely shifting the pressure to other dolphin populations in Japan. WAZA’s purported mission is to guide, encourage and support the zoos, aquariums, and like-minded organizations of the world in animal care and welfare, environmental education and global conservation. In support of this mission, WAZA officially opposes what it refers to as “Cruel and non-selective methods of taking animals from the wild.” There is no possible way that WAZA can in good

¹ Reeves, R.R., Smith B.D., Crespo, E.A. and Notarbartolo di Sciara, G. (compilers). 2003. Dolphins, Whales and Porpoises: 2002-1010 Conservation Action Plan for the World’s Cetaceans. IUCN/SSC Cetacean Specialist Group. IUCN. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. P.17

² R.J. Small and D.P. DeMaster, “Acclimation to captivity: A quantitative estimate based on survival of bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions,” *Marine Mammal Science* 11 (1995):510-519.

faith encourage captures, understanding there will be no enforcement or monitoring of these captures, and fully aware that no population studies exist to ensure methods of take are selective or sustainable.

According to WAZA and other zoo associations, dolphin populations in U.S. public display facilities have, in recent years, been maintained through captive breeding, imports, and the retention of non-releasable stranded animals. The U.S. public display industry has not captured any dolphins from U.S. waters since 1993. Given this depiction of the successful maintenance of captive dolphin populations without removing animals from the wild, encouraging captures for the purpose of public display in any country, especially one that has a long history of captures using inhumane methods, is contrary to WAZA policy and undermines the message that the on-going international trade in dolphins, which is inhumane and unsustainable, is not acceptable.

In good faith, we cannot support a policy that increases the pressure on all populations of dolphins within Japan's waters while allowing the killing to continue, whether for acquisition by international facilities that will continue to source from Taiji, or for the various other reasons the hunts continue, including for pest control, meat or politics. In accepting this unfortunate policy, WAZA is stepping away from the hunts, and absolving itself of any further responsibility for the protection of dolphins in Japan. By shifting the pressure points on Japan's dolphins, WAZA may do nothing more than increase the pressure and mortality. If WAZA really cares about its members' impact on wild populations, perhaps it should be funding independent population studies on the already heavily-targeted populations in Japan, while unequivocally discouraging acquisition from the wild.

We ask that WAZA withdraw its support for this new dolphin management protocol while continuing to seek an end to the drive hunts in Taiji. We would also like to request a face-to-face meeting with representatives of WAZA and our organizations to further discuss our concerns, and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincere regards,

Courtney S. Vail
WDCS, US

On Behalf of:

AKUT, Switzerland
Altarriba Foundation, Spain
A.M.I. Aqua-Mer-International, Switzerland
Animalia, Finland
Animals Asia Foundation
Animal Rights Sweden
Animal Welfare Institute
ATRA Lausanimalistas, Switzerland
BlueVoice.org
Born Free Foundation
Born Free USA
Care for the Wild International
Coalition for No Whales in Captivity- Vancouver, Canada
Canadian Marine Environment Protection Society- Vancouver, Canada
Cetacean Society International
De vilde Delfine, Denmark
Dr. Lori Marino, Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology Program, Emory University

Dr. Shirley McGreal, International Primate Protection League
Earth Island Institute
Elsa Nature Conservancy, Japan
Environmental Investigation Agency, International
FISRA, France
FRAPNA, France
Humane Society International
Irish Seal Sanctuary, Ireland
Lifeforce Foundation, Vancouver, Canada
New York Whale and Dolphin Action League
Ocean Friends, Washington, USA
OceanCare, Switzerland
Orca Network, Whidbey Island Washington, USA
Organisation for Respect and Care of Animals - ORCA, Serbia
Pro Wildlife, Germany
Réseau Cétaces, France
Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals e.V. (GSM), Denmark
SOS Animali International, Italy
Taiji Dolphin Action Group
VTMU - Verein Tier Mensch Umwelt, Switzerland

cc:

Gordon Reid
David Jones
Chris West