Analysis of Keto's endoscopy video

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We have viewed a video taken by Suzzane Allee which shows the endoscopy of ´Keto´ an orca held at Loro Parque, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain.

Although the beginning of the video shows that this facility seems to possess a "bottom up" pool, which is the best way in our opinion, to quickly and with minimum stress have a animal outside a pool, the rest of this endoscopy is really disappointing.

- You can clearly see that the orca IS able to move by himself and is responsive. He clearly responds to any signal from the trainer on the left, opening his mouth on cue until the last moment when he is rewarded by some trainers inserting this huge piece of "equipment" in his mouth to keep it open. This "forced endoscopy" has no point if the animal is not on the edge of dying and is therefore not responding to training. Normally, such intervention in this way would be considered "last minute". It should be only applied when no other choices are possible to save the animal, because he/she is in a really critical state, and not responding to any more stimulus from his/her trainers.

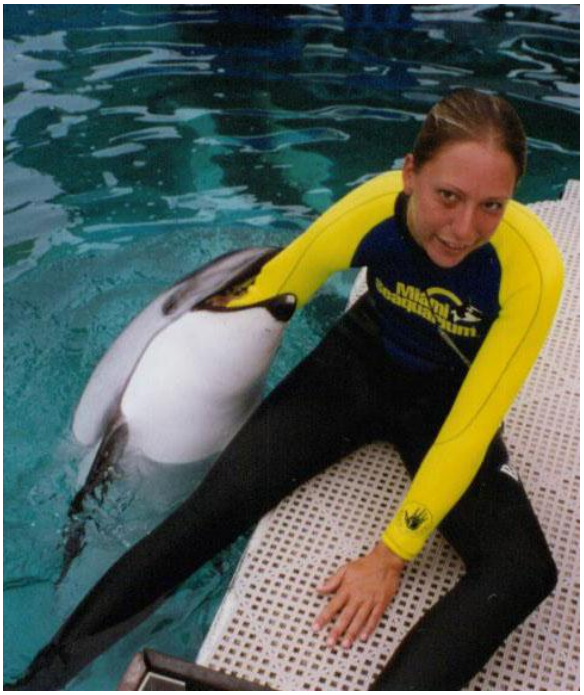
- Obviously this was not the case of Keto in this video, and it saddens us to see the reaction of this animal when, after answering pretty well to all the "open mouth" signals from his trainer, the only answer he got was having several people jump on him and sticking something in his mouth. We can then clearly see some sign of mixed surprise with some anger from Keto's reaction to this. The detail that amaze us though, is that despite all this sudden "aggression" toward him, this orca seems to still move and fight his troubles carefully, not trying to bite or hit his assailant. We have observed this type of response from the animals in other cases of forced husbandry procedures.

- Also, and this is our opinion concerning training there, as Keto was asked to open his mouth several times, without any sign of reward than this "forced endoscopy", there's a good chance the trainers will have some trouble later when asking him to open his mouth again on cue.

- In conclusion, with regards to this video, we will simply say that this husbandry behavior (along with other basic ones such like drawing blood, eye examinations, urine collection…etc) could be perfectly trained by experienced trainers. It is entirely feasible to do these types of husbandry procedures with the animal unrestrained and in the water. This type of husbandry procedures have been done with dolphins (which are much smaller than orca – see picture attached to this letter), but yet with similar, if not bigger, pipe diameter for the actual endoscopy. The procedure, when the training is done

right, could be also really enjoyed by marine mammals. We have observed individual bottlenose dolphins who enjoyed the experience to the extent that they willingly encouraged the examiner to insert their hand into the esophagus (e.g., see attached pictures from Miami Seaquarium). Obviously the hand and lower arm of a trainer has a much larger diameter than the endoscopy tube, but as there is no connection between the trachea (airway) and the esophagus (throat), dolphins (including orca) have no gag reflex, they don't generally feel discomfort when something is in their esophagus.

In conclusion, the fact that Loro Parque had to use this restraining technique to do an endoscopy on Keto is troubling, since if this is their standard method for doing an endoscopy, it illustrates the level (or lack of) experience of the trainers. Not only are the orca who are already held Loro Parque subjected to this inappropriate methodology, but Morgan will very likely be treated the same way at some point.



Left: **dolphin willingly accepting a tube into the esophagus, without restraint and whilst free swimming in the tank.** Right. **Dolphin encouraging trainer to insert her hand into the mouth and esophagus, illustrating that large items can be inserted, with the animal willingly participating. This was not a trained behavior and there was no fish reward associated with the event.**