

The ethical obligation to help animals in distress

André van Gemmert

Field project manager, Seal Rehabilitation and Research Centre (SRRC)

Pieterburen, The Netherlands

Contact information: andre@zeehondencreche.nl, +31 595 526526

THE SRRC

The Seal Rehabilitation and Research Centre (SRRC) was founded in Pieterburen in 1971 by Lenie 't Hart. The SRRC rehabilitates seals in distress which stranded at the Dutch coast. The centre has evolved from a simple orphanage for young seals to a scientific research-based seal hospital. All rehabilitated seals are released into the wild after a rehabilitation period of several months.



Volunteers and students at the SRRC



Cleaning oiled animals in the SRRC



Galapagos: oilspill



THE NEED FOR REHABILITATION

Throughout the past few decades, seal rehabilitation has become an activity, which has established a place in many countries. Rehabilitation is first of all the expression of the need to help individual animals in distress, which is experienced by many. Given that the anthropogenic impact on the seals and their environment is extensive in European waters, rehabilitation centers can compensate the consequences of this impact on individual seals as well as the population as a whole. Oil spills are one of the most obvious examples of human impact, it is therefore important to take immediate action to minimise the impact.



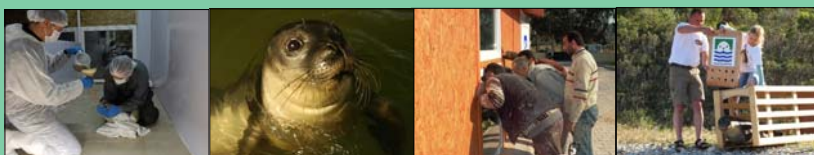
Mauritania: rehabilitation of a monk seal

LAW AND LEGISLATION

Ideas about animal welfare in a country, depends on the history of the country and it's people. Some countries have developed special laws for the protection of animals while other countries only have limited protection. In Europe, we see a slow development of the law and legislation concerning animal welfare. The rehabilitation of oiled animals is a relative new problem which needs more attention.

PROFESSIONAL HELP

For the optimal handling of animals, centralized operations with quality standards are essential. In 2004, the SRRC was the first animal rehabilitation centre to obtain an ISO 9001-2000 quality certificate. Strict protocols have to be in place to prevent contamination of infectious diseases from human to seal and vice versa. The professional care of seals can reduce mortality during rehabilitation to a minimum, resulting in the successful release of the treated animals.



Turkey: rehabilitation of a monk seal



Russia: rehabilitation of a ladoga seal

INTERNATIONAL HELP

Experience obtained with seal care in Pieterburen is of importance in countries where urgent help of threatened seal species is required. Rehabilitation requires experience, which can only be gained by treating many seals. This is how intimate knowledge of species and problems are built up. In these countries individual seals are ambassadors to raise support for the protection of the species in general.



Release of seals
(Zeeland, The Netherlands)

THE NON PROFIT WAY OF WORKING

This presentation demonstrates what a non profit organisation is able to achieve. Operations can only be successful when they are done with dedication and respect for individual animals. Also the involvement of local people is of great importance for the success of operations as well as for the continuation of the work. The SRRC has a network of trained volunteers all around the world, who are able to give immediate emergency response when needed.



Lenie 't Hart

SRRC Seal Rehabilitation and Research Centre
Hoofdstraat 94a
9968 AG Pieterburen, the Netherlands