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ORAL PRESENTATION, Special session on Risso's dolphins

**REHABILITATION AND MANAGEMENT OF A
RISSO'S DOLPHIN'S (*Grampus griseus*) CALF:**

Some veterinary aspects

Manuel García Hartmann^{1,3,*}, Alessandro Benvenuti^{2,3}, Giacomo Stanzani³, Lara Fichtel⁴, Julia Scharpegge¹,
Barbara Bianchani³

1. Zoo Duisburg, Muelheimer Str. 273, 47058 Duisburg, Germany, Manuel@uni-duisburg.de
2. Libero Professionista Roma
3. Dolphin Stranding Veterinary Task Force
4. Fondazione Cetacea ONLUS, via Ascoli Piceno, 47838 Riccione (RN), Italy
5. Oltremare, via Ascoli Piceno, 47838 Riccione (RN), Italy

On June 19th, 2005, a dependant Risso's dolphin calf and her mother were taken in for rehabilitation at the old dolphinarium of Riccione, Italy. The mother died two days later. The rehabilitation of the calf required intense diagnostic and therapeutic measures. Treatment was initiated on 21st of June and continues to the time of writing, day 206 of rehabilitation. The first two months were characterized by several acute health crisis, chronic health problems and feeding problems. The health problems included: several bacterial and fungal infections -including sepsis-, severe mineral imbalances and disturbances of homeostasis, severe protein and blood loss, kidney failure, insufficient immune response, bronchopneumonia, malignant hyperglycemia, hepatitis, maldigestion, skin wounds, muscle necrosis and some other conditions. Each of these conditions was diagnosed and treated by a combination of traditional and alternative medicine, according to the needs of the moment.

Next to her health problems, initially it was unclear whether this calf was able to digest solid food -like squid or fish- at all. A gastroscopy confirmed the small size of the first stomach and the larger size of the second stomach compartment, which is a sign that this calf was still fully dependent on milk and had to be reared with artificial milk. During the first weeks, the dolphin calf was handled under quarantine conditions. When all relevant diagnostic tests revealed the absence of the most contagious viral and bacterial marine mammal pathogens and when the calf was stable enough for transport, it was moved from the improvised rehabilitation facility (formerly closed old dolphinarium of Riccione) to the facility of Oltremare on day 63 of the rehabilitation. Treatment and husbandry strategies remained the same after the move, but the change in environmental parameters (more water depth and volume, better control of water quality, presence of other dolphins as social partners, etc.) helped to further improve the health, strength and behaviour of the animal.

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