Stranded cetaceans handling and first aid

AIM: reduce stress, give relief from hot, sun and wind until the arrival of first aid group

Approaching to the animal

✓ Approach the animal quietly and slowly from one side or in front. Avoid noise, lights and movements.

✓ Be careful to mouth and tail. Mouth, body and tail should be blocked simultaneously by personnel.

✓ Social and pelagic species are subject to stress.

✓ Assess the presence of skin wounds and look for fishing nets around the animal or in the mouth.

✓ Monitor: Respiratory rate: 4-8 breaths/minute

Interaction with the external environment

Abnormal behavior: → In the water: the animal is swimming rotated on circle, shows abnormal diving, etc.

→ On the shore: tremors, convulsions, unusual sounds, etc.

Alive cetaceans close to the shore

With no evident injures or physical and behavioural changes:

- Constant monitoring with no intervention

- Try to approach the animal in order to assess if it runs away

✓ If environmental condition could be dangerous → Try to push the animal toward the high sea

  - If is possible, use inflatable rafts

  - If using motorboats take care of the propeller

  - Approach the animal slowly from one side

  - Maintain safe distances

  - Try to make noise between the animal and coastline (for example: create a human chain making noise with metal objects). If unsuccessful after short time, stop it and try after some time

  - Note any altered behavior

✓ If the animal is injured/sick → any refloating effort could delay stranding:

  - Evaluate the option to take the animal close to the shore for medical evaluation

  - Contact an expert veterinarian or a first aid team
**Stranded cetaceans**

- Reduce manipulation and stressful condition, in particular in pelagic species.
- Maintain people at safe distance.
- Approach the animal from one side or in front.
- Do not touch eyes, blowhole and genital area (protect blowhole and eyes with saline solution or lubrificant).
- Do not use fins to move the animal.
- Dig holes under pectoral fins.
- If is possible use inflatable of foamy mattress on rocky beaches.
- The animal must be positioned on its belly.

**Avoid overheating** (also in cloudy days) by:

- Wet towels
- Shadowing the animal
- Suntan or hydratant cream (zinc dioxide)

**Avoid cooling** (especially during winter):

- Use mineral oils or cream on fins in small and emaciated animals to avoid thermic dispersion

**Moving the animal**

- Do not use ropes.
- Do not pull an animal without towels or in presence of rocks
- Do not pull from fins and/or tail.