



MEDIA RELEASE

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Collaboration is the key to addressing bottle-nose dolphin welfare

Review recommends uniting experts in cetology and welfare science in order to develop better ways of assessing dolphin welfare

Bottlenose dolphins are the most studied cetacean species and the most common in captivity but there is very little existing research on their welfare (in captivity or the wild) or how it can be assessed.

However, a recent review published in UFAW's scientific journal *Animal Welfare* uses three broad categories of behaviour, health and cognition to discuss how dolphin welfare has been assessed thus far, and how it could be assessed in the future.

The writers suggest that there is a clear need for research into dolphin welfare. There are 250 bottlenose dolphins in the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria facilities, 444 animals listed in US and Canadian dolphinariums and many others worldwide not registered on an official record – all maintained in a huge range of facility types.

Dr Isabella Clegg and Fabienne Delfour from the University of Paris co-authored the review with Cornelis Van Elk from Erasmus University, Rotterdam. Their review summarises various measures and potential measures of dolphin welfare including play and excessive aggression, health indicators such as body condition and stress hormone levels and cognition indicators of emotions such as fear, rage and depression.

Dr Clegg writes: "Behavioural measures are likely to be the most informative for dolphin welfare, and we have shown evidence that tactile affiliation, play, anticipatory behaviour and stereotypic behaviours may be closely linked to affective states. Cognitive measures reflect how behavioural and physiological components are integrated to form the affective states experienced by the animals and thus recent techniques such as cognitive bias testing hold much promise for future welfare assessment."

Also, any proposed measures should be tested in situations likely to elicit changes in welfare with adequate sample sizes to allow the major environmental variations to be controlled. Established measures would allow facility managers to monitor and improve the dolphins' welfare, aid in regulatory decisions and could enrich wild dolphin research by revealing changing affective states."

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

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The study also recommended uniting experts in cetology and welfare science in order to develop a rounded, holistic approach to assessing the welfare of dolphins and it is hoped that the findings from this review will stimulate researchers around the world to take up the challenge.

Further information

Subscribers to the Animal Welfare Journal will find this paper (*ILK Clegg, CE Van Elk and F Delfour Applying Welfare Science to Bottlenose Dolphins (Tursiops truncatus)*) in Volume 26 issue 2. The full abstract of the study can be read at UFAW's website <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/the-ufaw-journal/animal-welfare>.

If you wish to read the full paper, you can visit [ingentaconnect.com](http://www.ingentaconnect.com) to access the paper for \$25 (US) plus taxes.

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/ufaw/aw/2017/00000026/00000002/art00003>

Those purchasing the paper or choosing to subscribe to the Animal Welfare journal will be supporting UFAW's work.

<http://www.ufaw.org.uk/the-ufaw-journal/subscription-rates>

Ends

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Note to editors:

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarships; by educational initiatives, especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, reports and in its scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to governments and others, including for legislation and 'best practice' guidelines and codes; and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

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