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www.ufaw.org.uk

Animal Welfare 2022, 31: 423-432
ISSN 0962-7286
doi: 10.7120/09627286.31.4.007

Managing long-term wellness in captive sea turtles

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Abstract

Circumstances surrounding advances in stranding response and veterinary care have created a growing need for the long-term housing of captive sea turtles. However, the difficulty in recreating natural conditions in captive settings places a responsibility on caregivers to offset wild-type behavioural deficits with enrichment programming that is, preferably, commensurate with the limitations of each enclosure. Though standardised, multi-institutional behavioural monitoring programmes are currently lacking for marine turtles, facilities housing (or planning to house) sea turtles for the long-term are strongly advised to include 'wellness' as a fundamental part of their animal care protocol. Here, concepts of wellness and enrichment in sea turtles are reviewed, and a framework for developing long-term behavioural monitoring programming is provided.

Keywords: *animal welfare, aquarium, behaviour, enrichment, sea turtle, wellness*