



Inspection Report

SEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION INC
55 COOGAN BLVD.
MYSTIC, CT 06355

Customer ID: **56**
Certificate: **16-C-0025**
Site: 001
MYSTIC MARINE LIFE
AQUARIUM

Type: FOCUSED INSPECTION
Date: 29-SEP-2021

2.40(b)(2) Critical

Attending veterinarian and adequate veterinary care (dealers and exhibitors).

The USDA reviewed the facility's records for the 5-year-old whale, Havok, during the time he was on 24-hour watch. During the eight hours prior to his death, the staff members conducting the overnight watch documented multiple observations of abnormal behavior and did not alert the Attending Veterinarian. The frequency of these abnormal behaviors markedly increased during this time compared to what had been observed previously.

From 0000-2150 on the day prior to Havok's death, about 40 instances of a combination of "logging," shaking of pectoral flippers, "ventral up" and rolling behaviors were noted at the facility in various time intervals. Comparatively, during Havok's last eight hours 2151-0550, the facility's records noted at least 40 instances of 360 rolling, with one instance of four rolling behaviors noted at 0049 hours and five rolling behaviors noted at 0146 hours. Other abnormal behaviors noted to increase in frequency were at least 15 instances of "ventral up" (most of note was the instance of ventral up for 15 seconds at 0101 hours), 3 instances of "gasp" respirations beginning at 0413 hours, and 7 instances of water seen coming from his blowhole beginning at 0416 hours. There were also 10 instances of "active bleeding" from Havok's rostrum recorded during the two hours prior to his death.

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This increased frequency of abnormal behaviors constitutes a problem; can indicate rapid deterioration of the animal's health and may result in prolonged distress. Although staff members were recording their observations of Havok's behaviors, the veterinarian was not contacted during this eight-hour timeframe until Havok's death at 0550 hours.

The facility failed to provide adequate veterinary care by not using appropriate methods to prevent, control, diagnose and treat diseases during Havok's last eight hours.

Correct from this date 10/15/21 forward.

2.131(b)(1) Critical

Handling of animals.

The new whales were first given access to the older resident whales and the main pool in the habitat on 6/18/21. Facility records indicated that the five-year-old whale named Havok had been receiving treatment for over two weeks for an ocular condition that resulted in compromised vision. On 6/20/21, the gates between the three interconnecting pools were open allowing the eight whales access to all pools. A visitor dropped a foreign object in the main pool, which according to facility employees, is not unexpected when there are a lot of visitors present at the exhibits.

According to facility employees, in response to the foreign object, they closed the gate to the holding pool. The facility stationed other whales, but not Havok. A facility employee attempted to retrieve the object with a net. Per the facility, Havok was startled by the net in the main pool and then swam towards the holding pool after the gate was shut. Although the facility has applied dark hatch markings on the clear acrylic gate, Havok swam straight into the gate. According to facility records, Havok was "shut on main (pool), rammed gate to holding pool, re-opened rostrum wounds and new wound on upper left mandible." Results of the veterinarians' examination noted trauma sustained when he hit the gate

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included the presence of lacerations on the maxillary palate and the pre-existing wound on his rostrum re-opened and expanded.

Handling of all animals shall be done in a manner that does not cause physical harm. Foreign objects falling into exhibits from members of the public is an anticipated occurrence. The handling of the whales during the response to the foreign object falling into the pool was not done as carefully as possible to ensure the safety of all the animals, including Havok who had known vision impairment, a history of swimming into habitat walls, and a disposition for being "spooked," per his behavioral records and previous facility's medical records.

Correct from this date 10/15/21 forward.

3.101(a)(1) Critical **Facilities, general.**

The USDA reviewed the facility's records for the 5-year-old whale named Havok which contained multiple entries documenting injuries the animal sustained on the surfaces of the primary enclosure housing him. On 6/23/21 he injured himself on an area in the medical pool where the posts for the hydraulic mechanism are located. This incident resulted in a 4"x 4" round full thickness wound to the right caudal peduncle that required ongoing treatment. On 7/12/21 "staff note that whale appears to have reduced vision, often colliding with habitat wall and sustained rostral and fluke abrasions".

Indoor and outdoor housing facilities for marine mammals must be structurally sound and must be maintained in good repair to protect the animals from injury.

Correct from this date 10/15/21 forward.

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3.103(b)

Facilities, outdoor.

The USDA inspectors were at the holding pool inspecting where 3 belugas are currently being housed. The USDA noted that there are times during the day when the holding pool lacked sufficient shelter to protect the animals from direct sunlight. Although the building adjacent to the holding pool provides shade to parts of the pool at varying times during the day, there was no natural or artificial shelter available that provided the animals a consistent source of shade. Records maintained by the facility for the 5 new whales contained entries for the application of sunscreen from 6/11/21 through 9/28/21. Havok's medical record included an entry on 7/12/21 that described the presence of solar dermatitis with skin ulceration surrounding the blowhole and solar dermatitis on his melon and cranial dorsum. Records also document that the five whales have eye issues which can be exacerbated by direct sunlight. These conditions can be painful for the animals and may require treatment.

Per this Section of the Regulations, marine mammals that are kept outdoors shall be provided protection from the weather or from direct sunlight. Exposure to direct sunlight can adversely affect the animals' health resulting in eye or skin damage.

Correct by 12/15/21

3.106(a)

Water quality.

From 7/31/21 to 8/27/21 the recorded levels of ORP (Oxidative Reduction Potential), a measure of ozone in the water where the animals live, ranged between 476 and 715mV which is above the levels generally considered to be acceptable for marine mammals. There were eight consecutive days during this time period when the level ranged from 553 to 606.

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ORP levels that exceed 500mV can suggest that animals may be exposed to high oxidant levels in their pool and require immediate attention by marine mammal facilities. Elevated levels of oxidants in the water, such as ozone, are harmful to marine mammals and may cause irritation to eyes, skin, and the respiratory system. Per this Section of the Regulations the primary enclosure shall not contain water which would be detrimental to the health of the marine mammal contained therein.

This item was addressed by the facility prior to the inspection.

This inspection was conducted with facility representatives and NOAA personnel on 9/29/21 and 9/30/21.

The exit briefing was held 10/12/21 with facility representatives.

Additional Inspectors:

Tonya Hadjis, Supervisory Animal Care Specialist

Carolyn McKinnie, Senior Veterinary Medical Officer - Marine Mammals and Exotics

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Species Inspected

Cust No	Cert No	Site	Site Name	Inspection
56	16-C-0025	001	MYSTIC MARINE LIFE AQUARIUM	29-SEP-2021

Count	Scientific Name	Common Name
000004	<i>Delphinapterus leucas</i>	BELUGA WHALE
000004	Total	