

What to do with a live stranded dugong:?

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Why do live dugongs strand?

Dependent calf separated from mother

Injured/ sick animal

Stranded by tide or storm surge



What to do when live dugong strands?

- Dependent calf separated from mother – will need milk, plant food and 24 hour care
 - Injured/ sick independent animal
 - Independent dugong stranded by tide or storm surge
- } Return to sea as soon as possible or after period in holding pen or euthanase depending on condition



Dugongs are not ideal aquarium animals

Individuals may live in captivity for many years, but:

- Mortality rate often high
- Never bred in captivity despite opportunity at Toba
- Males and females may have to be separated (Sydney)
- May not grow properly (Gracie, Singapore)
- Very expensive: food and labour



Examples of cruelty to captive dugongs



The story of 'Pig'

- Stranded as 20 kg neonate in north Australia 1998
- Moved 2000 km to Sea World, Gold Coast
- 24 hour care from veterinarian for several months
- Staged release to wild after 3.5 years
- Found in very poor condition 8 months later (lost 26% of body weight and beaten up)
- Returned to captivity
- Health gradually restored after fecal transplant
- Transferred to Sydney Aquarium- never to be released
- Separated from female due to violent behaviour



So what do you do with a live orphan dependent calf?

- Euthanase
- Return to sea and hope it finds a lactating female dugong
 - mother
 - adoptive mother
- Attempt to rear in captivity
 - Locally
 - Commercial facility

Likely death sentence



Policy appropriate to local situation required in advance of crisis – needs to be developed and advertised

Is it legal to keep a dugong in captivity in your country?



A stranded baby dugong can be an educational opportunity or a public relations disaster

Fisherman mourns as freed dugong dies
10 March 1999



Si Tenang Malaysia 1999

QUESTIONS?

