

CAZA Position on: Maintenance and Display of Cetaceans (whales and dolphins) In Human Care

Preamble

The Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) is a non-profit professional association representing Canada's accredited zoos and aquariums. CAZA is dedicated to the advancement of the zoo and aquarium industry through the professional display, interpretation and maintenance of wildlife to provide visitors a better understanding of nature, wildlife, and the needs for their conservation. The main objectives of CAZA accredited institutions are stimulating public interest in nature and conservation, conducting conservation-oriented research, and advancing the sciences of animal care and management. To do that, each CAZA institution has a mandate to develop self-sustaining populations of captive species to the degree that is possible.

With regard to the keeping of cetaceans, CAZA recognizes there are emotional and philosophical arguments about housing dolphins, porpoises and whales in zoological parks and aquariums. CAZA firmly believes that with all animals, including cetaceans, the value that seeing the living animal brings to the process of engagement, awareness, learning, and motivation far outweighs the negative arguments.

In fact, it is through the public display of cetaceans and the educational thrust of our zoological parks and aquariums that public concern and appreciation for the plight of cetaceans and their habitat has grown.

Position

- CAZA supports the exhibition, interpretation, and study of cetaceans in human care in order to facilitate scientific and husbandry research, public awareness and learning, formal education programs, conservation programs and captive propagation efforts
- CAZA supports only those institutions that fulfil the professional accreditation requirements, including adherence to the professional code of ethics outlined by CAZA. CAZA accreditation standards meet or exceed general industry standards for the successful care of captive cetaceans.

- CAZA strongly supports the application of explicit housing and health care standards for the maintenance of cetaceans in Canadian zoological institutions such as those developed cooperatively by CAZA and the Canadian Council of Animal Care (CCAC).
- CAZA supports the establishment of socially compatible and genetically viable captive populations of cetacean species at accredited zoological institutions.
- CAZA supports the co-operation of accredited zoological institutions in breeding programs aimed at maintaining the genetic variability of captive cetacean groups. This includes the exchange of general information and care techniques, the transfer of animals between accredited institutions and the formation of advisory groups to co-ordinate and manages successful propagation programs.
- CAZA supports the sale or transfer of cetaceans from non-accredited or substandard facilities to accredited institutions whenever such sale or transfer is in the best interests of the animal.
- CAZA supports the taking of additional cetaceans from wild stocks, when required to incorporate new genetic material into captive populations, to salvage endangered populations, to rehabilitate stranded specimens and to study disease and toxic contamination in free-ranging stocks.
- CAZA supports the co-operation of accredited zoological institutions with provincial and federal agencies to conduct research for the purpose of developing more refined management and conservation programs.

CAZA supports the continuation of cetacean display, research and education programs at its member institutions, under the above conditions, where cetaceans fit with the institution's strategic display, interpretation and conservation programs.