



29 September 2010

Forum Editor
Straits Times

Dear Sir,

Wild animals in entertainment – it's about empathy too

The article 'Dolphin Lagoon is too small': SPCA, Friday 10 September highlighted SPCA's concerns over the small size pools that the dolphins are now housed in at Underwater World, Sentosa.

It was also reported that the main pool area for Underwater World's six dolphins exceeds international guidelines and safety standards - and is approved by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority.

Whilst we appreciate that there are studies currently being carried out to assess the dolphins' behaviour and that if new information becomes available, the necessary steps will be taken to redesign the pool and the activities, stress factors, or the way a dolphin behaves after years of conditioning and adapting to life in captivity, may not always be evident or clear cut.

Aside from the pool size, the question one must ask is, how have these animals benefited from:

- a) being taken from their natural environment and deprived of their natural behaviour which includes hunting for their prey
- b) confinement in captivity
- c) being subjected to questionable training methods and forced to perform
- d) getting up close and personal with humans for photography or swimming sessions

All of the above actions have definitely compromised the welfare of these animals including their emotional well being.

There have been tragic incidents universally where performing wild animals (seemingly tamed), have reached their limit psychologically and are pushed to the brink, including the killer whale incident at SeaWorld, Atlanta, Florida earlier this year where the animal killed its trainer. The animal's long term confinement in captivity and punishing regime of daily performances no doubt eventually took its toll.

The sooner we can empathise with the animals themselves, and move away from the outmoded concept of capturing them for entertainment purposes, the sooner a respect can be fostered for these intelligent, sensitive and emotional creatures that are certainly deserving of a better quality of life.

In 2002, a government ban was placed on wild animal performances in visiting circuses – this was a welcome move and a big step forward in terms of progress for animal welfare in Singapore. The SPCA looks forward to the day when there are no more wild animals shows held here.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Moss (Ms)
Executive Director