



## British Divers Marine Life Rescue Seal Pup Rehabilitation Policy

BDMLR medics are routinely called to seal pups reported stranded on UK beaches. In many circumstances, BDMLR is the first organisation called, sometimes before local seal rehabilitation facilities.

It is important however, that BDMLR medics work in close association with local seal rehabilitation facilities to ensure that the correct option is taken following assessment on the beach and that there is continuity of care for the seal pup. It needs to be remembered that the rehabilitation facility will have to care for, at their expense, seal pups presented to them by BDMLR. Every effort must be made therefore to ensure the facility is consulted over all decisions made during the rescue process.

Please therefore can Head Office staff, those manning the phones and medics in the field adhere wherever possible to the following protocol:

- 1) If calls are received about a seal pup in an area where there is a seal rehabilitation facility, and it is determined from the call that there is likely to be a need to attend, the rehabilitation facility should be contacted and advised. We would ask rehabilitation facilities to extend the same courtesy to BDMLR if it is known that the charity has an active team in the area. In this way, hopefully duplication of effort can be avoided.
- 2) If the seal is reported in an area where seals are infrequently seen, it would be advisable to report this to the nearest facility even if the pup does not need to be attended to.
- 3) If the rehabilitation facility already has notice of the animal and is in attendance then there is no essential need for medics to attend. However, medics would undoubtedly gain experience working alongside facility staff in such a situation and BDMLR would be grateful if facility staff would co-operate with such informal training, on the understanding that it causes no delay in a seal's assessment and treatment.
- 4) If the facility has a member of the public observing the seal, this should be respected but we would ask facilities with whom we work to utilise BDMLR medics for these observations wherever practical. It should be borne in mind that often there will be occasions where a medic is living close by and can rapidly turn out to assess a pup.
- 5) The rehabilitation facility should be liaised with during assessment and decision making on the beach to ensure there is agreement over the option taken. In this regard, medics should make full use of the assessment criteria used for seals as taught during the medic course and listed in the handbook, i.e. age, body condition/nutritional status, signs of trauma and disease and additional issues such as public disturbance. When there is any indecision about the animal's condition, experienced personnel within BDMLR should be consulted prior to contacting the rehabilitation facility. Camera phones should be used wherever practical to relay images of the seal to the rehabilitation facility and BDMLR personnel.
- 6) If there is a difference of opinion over whether a seal should be admitted for rehabilitation then medics must consult further with the veterinary coordinator, assistant veterinary coordinator or other BDMLR veterinary consultants. This person will then liaise with the

rehabilitation facility to try and resolve the situation. In the extremely unlikely event that agreement still cannot be reached, BDMLR will take the decision to remove the pup to an alternative rehabilitation facility.

- 7) It is absolutely essential that the health and safety of medics and members of the public is not jeopardised during any rescue and this should be a key consideration in any decision making.
- 8) If a pup is brought into a rehabilitation facility that, in the opinion of the facility, does not require rehabilitation, then we would ask the facility to discuss this first with the medics concerned as soon as possible. If this does not resolve the issue, we would ask the facility to contact BDMLR Head Office (tel. 01825 765546).