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For Immediate Release

Dolphinaria-Free Europe calls on Danish facility Fjord & Bælt to release two wild-caught porpoises

Dolphinaria-Free Europe (DFE) is a coalition whose members include eminent marine mammal scientists, animal welfare experts, conservationists, NGOs, individual members and advisors from around the globe. We seek to phase out and ultimately eliminate the keeping of cetaceans in captivity in Europe, whilst striving towards greater protection for those still held captive, through investigation, advocacy and education.

Joint letter to the Danish ministers: Free Saga and Eskild

It is deeply problematic that the Danish facility Fjord & Bælt has been granted permission to retain two young, bycaught harbour porpoises. DFE, together with our member organisation World Animal Protection (WAP), Denmark, are calling on the Danish authorities to prohibit future exemption permits.

Porpoises are a protected species. Nevertheless, since 1995, Fjord & Bælt has been granted exemption permits from the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to dispense from the law and retain harbour porpoises who are accidentally trapped in fishing nets, also known as bycatch. In most of the world – and also in Denmark – bycaught cetaceans must be released immediately. The only exception is when animals are assessed to be too weak or injured for immediate release. Those individuals should undergo a short period of rehabilitation before being returned to the wild or, if they are too damaged, then they should be humanely euthanized. It is therefore out of step with usual practice for the Danish authorities to allow Fjord & Bælt to permit releasable porpoises to be retained for a lifetime in captivity.

According to the Danish Order on Species Conservation, only an authorized person or facility can rescue and rehabilitate cetaceans. But the intention behind the permit granted to Fjord & Bælt is not, and has never been, to save or rehabilitate cetaceans; it is for research. Even when they are suitable for release, the center can retain animals. This is not a rescue operation, but a deliberate capture of wild animals from a protected population. It is unethical and sends a bad conservation message to the Danish public and the rest of the world about the importance of taking care of a protected species.

In a joint letter to Rasmus Prehn, Danish Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Lea Wermelin, Danish Minister for the Environment, DFE and WAP strongly urge the authorities in charge to prohibit any future permits being granted to retain healthy bycaught/wild cetaceans, and also to determine the suitability of Saga and Eskild for a careful, monitored release back into the wild.

ENDS

Images available

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