SELF-MUTILATION IN CANADIAN CAPTIVE CETACEANS

Captive cetaceans often neurotically rub and bang their bodies against the hard surfaces of the concrete tanks. These behaviours typically continue over extended periods of time, resulting in scars and reoccurrences of wounds – a form of self-mutilation.

These self-mutilations are a type of stereotypy (abnormal, repetitive behaviour with no obvious function). Stereotypies are associated with inappropriate housing and lack of appropriate stimulation (resulting in boredom) for the animal. Please see appendix regarding teeth for another example of this type of damage.

NOTE: All photographs taken from public viewing areas without special access to the animals.

Open wounds (lower jaw) and scars (upper and lower jaws) from self-harming, May 2011

Jelly-Bean, June 2015. Close-up of scars. Note the expansion of the scars on the upper jaw towards the melon and on the lips of the lower jaw. Such expansion is likely due to either repeatedly opening the wound and exacerbating it, or an infection getting into the wounds.
Kiska (female orca). Marineland of Canada

White scar on the tip of her rostrum *June 2017*, a healed self-mutilation scar. The white area, surrounded by discolouration, on the lower jaw, is also a result of continually banging her mandibles against hard surfaces.

LEFT: Open wound on the tip of Kiska’s left tail fluke tip. Bleeding, open wounds on the tip of this fluke have been documented since July 2012. This photo was taken June 2015 (3 years later) and the wound is still open and raw.

BELOW: Right tail fluke tip, through underwater viewing window. There is evidence to support that this wound has been open for years as well.

Additional stereotypies for her are described in Visser (2015) Kiska report submitted to Ontario Government with reference to Bill 80 which has since been ratified.
Chester (male false killer whale). Vancouver Aquarium.

Vancouver Aquariums first denied there were any issues, but now they have published on their official website, with their veterinarian now admitting that Chester has been exhibiting “attention-seeking” behaviour (a stereotypy), which resulted in the open wound. This animal was rescued as a newborn.

Open wounds and scars from self-harming, **June 2014**

Open wounds and scars enlarged from repetitive banging and rubbing due to boredom more than a year after his rescue, **July 2015**
Helen (female Pacific white-sided dolphin). Vancouver Aquarium.
White scaring on the lower jaws (mandibles), July 2015, indicative of previous self-mutilation behaviour. Also note at least seven front teeth on each mandible are worn to the gum. Such tooth wear is indicative of a stereotypie of chewing on concrete or hard surfaces in a captive environment. This dolphin has an additional neurotic behaviour of regurgitating and ‘tossing’ food (video available)

Please also see section regarding damage to teeth of captive cetaceans.