

Dear Amanda Flint on behalf of the WCA:

Taking your letter under consideration (received by e-mail on the 6th of August 2016) we feel that we must give you some context to the whole situation concerning Martinha.

First of all we would like to clarify that the main reason that led us to foreclose any Born Free support was the way Mr. Alexander Sanchez approached CRAMQ in 2014. When requesting the visit, Mr. Sanchez stated he would very much like to learn from us, since he had been told "*we were doing an amazing rehabilitation work*" [translated from Spanish]. It was not for sometime after his visit that we received a letter stating that he had visited CRAMQ as a Born Free representative. We therefore qualified Mr. Sanchez's approach as untrustworthy and so we refrained from any other contacts or cooperation with either Mr. Sanchez or with the organizations he appeared to be affiliated with (at the time, this issue was explained in a letter sent to the Born Free Foundation).

Secondly, it came to our knowledge that a report was elaborated, perhaps by Mr. Sanchez, about his visit to CRAMQ. At the time, Mr. Sanchez and the people accompanying him were told not to take photographs and not to film the facilities, a common procedure in any rehab centre. They did so anyway, and so they were requested not to pass on the images to anyone. We realise now that this request was disrespected as well. Furthermore, we are not aware of the contents of such report.

With respect to your letter, it appears that you have been utterly misinformed about Martinha's situation. We must seriously condemn and disapprove of your choice of words (such as languishing and backyard pool) to describe Martinha and her tank. In fact, Martinha is an active dolphin, showing high-speed swimming alternating with resting periods, a very playful behaviour, actively chasing fish and squid that is made available to her 8-10 times a day with no behaviour conditioning whatsoever. In no way would anyone ever describe Martinha as a dolphin "languishing in the rescue centre's back-yard pool", and all the international experts contacted since Martinha

was admitted to the center were fully aware of her condition and never proposed any changes to this.

About the “5 freedoms” issue, even though they mostly apply to farm or otherwise domestic animals, we are extreme supporters of the fact that animals are sentient beings so all specimen in our rehabilitation centre are always maintained in the best conditions possible. In fact, we are very surprised that you are accusing a rehabilitation centre of disrespecting the “5 freedoms” when there are so many captive dolphins around the world in non-rehab facilities that actually offer poor conditions. These animals are trained to show a conditioned behaviour and they may be actually suffering. We must emphasise that:

- Martinha has always been free from hunger or thirst,
- Martinha is free from discomfort
- Martinha is free from pain, injury or disease,
- Martinha has always expressed normal behaviours
- Martinha is free from any fear or distress.

In fact, we have medical reports asserting Martinha’s well-being. As you probably know, by maintaining a veterinary record with consistent blood analysis and all types of clinical evaluations, it is possible to prove that Martinha is in good body condition (and therefore free from hunger or thirst) and that Martinha is free from pain, injury or disease (whenever an imbalance is detected it is immediately treated, since this is actually a rehabilitation center). Martinha has never been trained or conditioned in any way. She demonstrates trust towards her caretakers, which proves that Martinha has never been uncomfortable, afraid or distressed (quite the opposite, actually).

Your statements saying that Martinha is languishing in our tank and that we are violating at least 4 out of the 5 freedoms you listed are very serious and we would like to be informed of the facts (technical and medical reports, blood analysis database, other work) on which you based such serious allegations. We would also like to ask you to be more specific about which 4 of the “5 freedoms” you are accusing us of breaking, in which way and based on what information. You specifically state “...the conditions that Martinha is currently kept in at CRAM-Q do not fulfill her physiological or behavioural needs.” Did you have access to any blood analyses results or behaviour

studies that allowed you to claim that her needs are not being met? We would like to know what led WCA to reach this conclusion.

You also state “We believe that very little has changed for Martinha in these two years”. Again, please let us know which information did you use that led you to this belief. In fact, in the last 2 years a lot of work was done that you are probably not aware of. Just as we received your letter, another common dolphin was rescued, rehabilitated in our centre and released back to the ocean. This common dolphin was in one of our tanks for 58 days with 24h surveillance in 8hr shifts, each with at least 2 dedicated technicians. After solving the bacterial infection and parasite load, the dolphin’s blood analysis, endoscopies and echography revealed a full recovery and therefore a decision was taken to release the dolphin.

Also, over the past 2 years, plans were made to build a much larger tank that could act as a sanctuary for Martinha. These new facilities are now finished and Martinha will be transferred shortly. This new tank holds 1.500,000 liters (1500 m³) of water, has a 5-meter depth and a 800m² surface, with physical filtration, UV treatment and a protein skimmer with ozone (no chlorine is necessary). In this new tank she will have more space to swim, access to live prey and conditions that do not exist in any rehabilitation centre in Europe.

As you can see, we have Martinha’s best interest at heart (hers and that of all the other cetaceans, pinnipeds, seabirds and marine turtles that were ever in our care), and we have struggled very hard to provide her with the best conditions possible. Since her admittance into rehabilitation, and considering all the progress made, it has always been our goal to release Martinha back into the wild. So far, this has never been possible because she never reached a fully stable medical condition that would guarantee a complete success in case of release.

Of course, we are probably not aware of all of the work performed worldwide with dolphin rehabilitation. In your letter you state, “There are many documented cases of successful dolphin rehabilitation”. We would very much appreciate if WCA could let us

know about these many documented cases of successful long-term rehabilitation concerning common dolphins.

In your letter, you express a desire to find a resolution in partnership with CRAM-Q to Martinha's situation and that there are plans for marine sanctuaries specifically for cetaceans. We believe that the new rehab facilities, will provide the best possible situation for Martinha's well being. However, your financial support would be most welcome. For example Martinha's food during 1 year costs about 8000€. Also, on average, travel to/from rescuing sites, personnel, animal food, medication, vet materials, water and electricity, costs about 500 000€ each year, which we struggle very much to obtain.

As you can see, the animals' wellbeing is our priority. We also appreciate that you work to improve conditions for cetaceans around the world. We have informed you about Martinha's situation and the new facilities that will provide her the support she needs. However, if you still feel you can suggest a better solution, please let us know more about the cetacean sanctuaries you mentioned. Where will they be located? What will be the main concerns to make them appropriate for common dolphins? Who are the rehab technicians involved and what is their experience with common dolphins? How will you maintain a multispecies enclosure (if that is the case) without behavior conditioning (which would obviously violate the assumption that these animals are sentient beings) or without risk of conflicts and injuries? We are sure that you would also like to see all of these doubts clarified before embarking on such a journey.

We are therefore open to a trust-based dialogue and we await your replies to our concerns (no deadline).

On behalf of SPVS /CRAM

the 21st of August, 2016.