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To: Loro Parque  
Re: Value of research at Loro Parque

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the research and conservation efforts carried out by Loro Parque and the Loro Parque Foundation. The question of the value of research on animals under managed care, particularly marine mammals, has been in debate for many years. However, there are numerous areas of research with managed-care marine mammals that are directly applicable to marine mammal conservation and to improving the welfare of animals under human care. Of note is the study of marine mammal hearing, which is of particular concern because of the potential impact of anthropogenic sound on wild marine mammals. Nearly all of what we know about the hearing capabilities of marine mammals was obtained with animals maintained under human care. Even the techniques used today for studying hearing on stranded marine mammals were developed with the participation of managed-care animals.

Loro Parque is currently engaged in an effort to perform hearing tests on the killer whales it maintains. This effort is important to expanding our knowledge of hearing capabilities in this species, particularly with respect to the variation in hearing range and sensitivity as a function of age and gender. Currently, our knowledge of hearing in killer whales is based on three individuals, one of which likely had a hearing deficit. Because of the small sample size, little is known about the variation in hearing sensitivity of killer whales and how it varies in relation to demography. The current effort at Loro Parque, in addition to parallel efforts at other facilities maintaining killer whales, will substantially increase our knowledge of hearing capabilities and variability in this species.

Marine mammals maintained under human care have much to offer us with regard to scientific knowledge and the scientific advances made with their participation can be used to better conserve and manage stocks of wild marine mammals. For this reason, as well as the other research sponsorships provided by the Loro Parque Foundation in support of animal conservation, I support and encourage the research efforts of Loro Parque.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dorian S. Houser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dorian S. Houser, Ph.D.