

The Case Against Captive Dolphins Talking Points

1. Dolphins are highly intelligent creatures

- Dolphins have more brain gray matter than humans – this is the part of the brain responsible for memory, thought, consciousness and language
- The size of a dolphin's brain relative to its body size is only slightly smaller than that of a human – unlike the great apes which is much smaller
- Dolphins can understand combinations of complex instructions
- They are self-aware, an ability that doesn't develop in humans until age 2
- They have highly developed communication skills, including having unique signature whistles to identify themselves to others (like our names)
- Dolphins experience emotions

2. Nearly all captive dolphins are caught in the wild and do not come from captive breeding programs

- Captive breeding programs have had limited success and cannot sustain the demand for captive dolphins
- Dolphinariums create demand for more wild captures and wild capture methods are cruel and inhumane – they traumatize the animals, separate family groups and lead to high mortality rates among both captured and those not captured
- If the TCI believes in protecting marine mammals in our waters (see discussion of Regulation 18 below), we should not support the unregulated and inhumane capture of them in other countries
- Many countries, such as the US, Mexico, Brazil and many others have banned the capture of wild dolphins in their waters – Japan and Cuba are the most common locations for wild capture today
- There is a six-fold increase in mortality of a dolphin that is captured during the first five days after capture – and this mortality risk increase occurs every time a dolphin is transported (for example, from Jamaica to Grand Turk)

3. Public opinion is growing in opposition to captive dolphin programs

- A 2007 survey of US citizens found only 30% believed there was a scientific benefit to keeping dolphins in captivity
- A 2003 survey of Canadian citizens found that only 14% believed that viewing dolphins in captivity was educational; 74% thought the best way to learn about them was to view them in the wild
- Many countries, the latest being India and including the new target for tourism to the TCI, Brazil, have banned captive dolphin facilities
- Regulation 18 of the TCI Fisheries Protection Ordinance was enacted to protect JoJo and other marine mammals from the activities promoted by swim with the dolphin programs

4. Keeping dolphins in sea pens, as proposed here has the following adverse effects:

- Significantly reduced physical activity – wild dolphins swim as much as 100 miles/day
- Dolphins are not scavengers – they must be taught to eat dead, imported fish which lacks adequate nutritional value requiring them to be also given vitamins and other nutritional supplements
- Unlike other animals kept in captivity, there is no increase in life expectancy for captive dolphins despite the purported benefits of reduced predation, abundance of food and good medical care
- Monitoring the health of captive dolphins is challenging which often means that by the time a problem is observed, it is frequently too late for successful treatment