



**SEAL**  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY



**To rehab or not to rehab — that  
is the question**

## Some questions about rehab?

What are the benefits of rehab? To individual? To population? Education ?

Are there any adverse impacts of rehab? To the individual? To the population?  
Counter-education?

Do benefits and impacts depend on the scale of the rehab effort? In absolute terms – or as % population

Is there any danger of seals being taken unnecessarily? How can this be assessed? Should it be controlled by licence?

What sort of national/regional/international database of stranding/taking for rehab should be kept?

Are there lessons to be learned or shared from the Wadden Sea experience?  
Or from other regions?

Can we assemble some thoughts on the best ways in which rehab can be compatible with both benefits to individual animals and to the population?

Can large-scale rehab impinge on the dynamics of population growth and social structure? In a good way? Bad way? Or Neutral impact?

(This is assuming no additional infection of disease from human environment)

Can the workshop group develop guidelines for

- How to recognise a stranded pup
- When is it necessary to take a decision to take pup for rehab, euthanise or take no intervention, and on what basis should the decision be taken
- Can we study the causes of stranding, with the aim of reducing pup separations and postweaning debilitation/lungworm, with the aim of reducing anthropogenic causes.

Should rehab eventually focus on 'fixing' anthropogenic impacts, while leaving natural population mechanisms alone? Can we distinguish the two?

- Are there any alternative forms of intervention other than taking for rehab or euthanise?



**SEAL**  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY



'I know it's extremely difficult and heartbreaking to leave a pup on the beach and let nature take its course but, like it or not, this is one way nature controls population numbers,' said Traxler. 'As with most wildlife, not all of the pups born are meant to survive.'

"Human disturbance can also play a potential factor in pup strandings..... if you get too close and the seals get nervous, sometimes the moms and pups become separated when they rush to the water. With our strong tides and currents, in no time these little pups can get swept away and end up on somebody's beach where they'll eventually starve to death.

"That doesn't mean that the Stranding Network doesn't pick up any of these pups. A limited number are brought to [Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehab Center](#) every summer, but only when they meet the strict regulations authorized by the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) - the federal agency that permits the Stranding Network to operate.

<http://www.islandssounder.com/news/124297144.html>