

**Friday, May 22, 2009**

## **How Now Brown "Cow"**

Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue Centre rehabilitates female Northern elephant seal for safe return to ocean

**Vancouver, BC** – Today staff and volunteers from the Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue Centre (VAMMR) traveled from Vancouver to Sooke to release "Cow", a rescued female Northern elephant seal, into the ocean off North Sooke.

"Cow" was rescued April 6th, after calls flooded Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue Centre (VAMMR) regarding a Northern elephant seal found on Rainbow Beach in Esquimalt's inner harbour. A team comprised of Aquarium staff, DFO officers and BCSPCA Wildarc animal care personnel executed the rescue plan. After being transported and admitted to VAMMR, Dr. Martin Haulena, Staff Veterinarian at Vancouver Aquarium, diagnosed Cow with Northern elephant seal skin disease (NESSDz) and prescribed antibiotics.

After more than six weeks of intensive care, "Cow" began to eat on her own and had gained well over 60kg during rehabilitation. Her ulcers healed well and her hair growth mostly returned. For nutrition, she ate 14 kg of herring daily with vitamins.

On Friday morning the VAMMR team released "Cow" off the coast of Sooke back to her natural habitat. Lindsay Akhurst, Coordinator at VAMMR said, "Once Cow made her way independently from the beach into the water, she began to swim right away. Her head popped out of the water as she swam, and this is maybe the last time we'll ever see her again."

Marine mammal release days are very rewarding for the staff and volunteers who have worked so hard to rehabilitate a marine mammal. Release sites are carefully selected by the VAMMR team, and are usually sheltered, calm bays or coves, where newly released animals can take some time to readjust to the life in the wild.

### **About Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue**

The primary goal of the Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue and Rehabilitation Program is to provide housing and care for ill, injured, or abandoned marine mammals and to rehabilitate them for release back into their natural habitat. If you see a marine mammal you feel needs help, keep your distance and call 604-258-SEAL (7325).

### **About the Vancouver Aquarium**

The Vancouver Aquarium is a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, conservation practices, education, research, and direct action. Learn more at [www.vanaqua.org](http://www.vanaqua.org)

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