

CLEARWATER MARINE AQUARIUM

Frequently Asked Questions

WINTER

Why is Winter's tail getting worse?

Winter's tail is not getting worse. As Winter ages, her condition may change and her body shape changes, just like humans. She is the first animal with this type of condition. We are working with many veterinarians and trained specialists at the top in their field to ensure we are providing Winter with the best care to support her health and well being.

What are your plans for when Winter dies?

Although Winter and her incredible story are special and unique, she is only one of many unique and amazing animals we care for daily. Winter's legacy will always continue through the people she has touched.

NICOLAS

Why is Nicholas alone?

Similar to male dolphins in the wild, Nicholas actually does very well by himself. Nicholas cannot be placed with our female dolphins because of their size and age. As with all of our animals, we make sure they have the appropriate daily engagement, enrichment and exercise to ensure their social, emotional and physical well being.

Why is Nicholas dorsal fin bent?

Dolphin's dorsal fins are made of a connective tissue similar to cartilage which naturally bends and changes over time. Every dolphin's dorsal fin is different, similar to our fingerprints. His dorsal fin may be bent simply due to genetics. CMA has developed a Dorsal Fin ID program to identify and monitor the wild dolphins in the area to better understand their patterns, behaviors and any issues or challenges that may occur. You can have the chance to experience this during our Dolphin Adventure Tour.

Why doesn't Nicholas have a friend?

It is a natural occurrence to see a male on his own rather than in a group/pod like the females of this species. That being said, we are actively looking for a companion for Nicholas but a lot of factors must be considered and we must make sure it's the right fit.

Why is Nicholas not with the females?

At this point, due to size and age, neither Hope nor Winter would be adequate pool mates.

PELICANS

Is that the only place the pelicans live?

This is a temporary housing arrangement for our pelicans while we are in the design and construction phase for a more permanent habitat. In the meantime, we provide care and enrichment daily that includes sessions outside of this temporary habitat.

OTTERS

Why aren't the Otters together?

All of our otters are at varying levels of physical activity. They are a more aggressive species and putting them together could lead to further injuries.

PREVIOUS RESIDENTS

Why did Indy die?

Unfortunately we do not know. There was nothing significant on his necropsy report to indicate why Indy passed.

Why did Panama die?

Panama was an older animal and her necropsy showed she died from respiratory failure.

ANIMAL CARE

Will you breed Hope or Winter?

There are no plans to breed either Winter or Hope.

Why isn't the Vet at CMA all the time?

While communication with the veterinarian team occurs multiple times a day, we have an experienced and extensive full time animal care staff at CMA that is trained to carry out husbandry and important medical procedures. The vets are here at CMA several days a week.

Why did we spend money to repaint the pools and move Winter and Hope when we are still seeing the rust and chipping paint?

With the age of our concrete and our building, we are unable to entirely eliminate the years of saltwater erosion/corrosion in the structure. This is one of several reasons as to why we are working towards a new facility in downtown Clearwater, which will better serve our resident animals.

Would you bring in other dolphins?

This is entirely possible. It is important to remember that we rescue animals and some have a lifelong condition that is not conducive to successful survival in the open environment. Once an animal is placed in our care, it is our responsibility to ensure it is then taken care of medically and socially.

Do you think we are pushing our animals daily by asking them to do shows and guest interactions?

Everything we do with our animals is designed to enhance their mental and physical health since they are unable to be released into the wild. What you see would be done even if there weren't any guests to see it. Dolphins require mental and physical stimulation to maintain good health. They cannot simply be left to themselves.

Are we exploiting our animals by doing a second Dolphin Tale and discussions of further media (DT3 or television series)?

Everything we do with our animals is designed to enhance their mental and physical health since they are unable to be released into the wild. This includes any participation in movies. CMA staff oversees all aspects of the animals during any such project.

FACILITY

Why are the pools small?

Our pools at CMA meet or exceed the USDA requirements for housing dolphins. However, we intend to build much larger pools in our new aquarium.

Why are there rust spots in the aquarium?

We are a recycled water treatment plant that has started to show its age. We continue to improve our facility and have built new animal care areas and life support systems. We are also working on a new downtown building that will allow us to expand the reach of our mission of research, rescue, rehab, release, education and inspiration.

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If we have money for improving guest areas, why would we not spend that money on improving animal habitats?

We have. The vast majority of our capital expenses have been for animal care areas and animal care infrastructure, including our new stranding pools.

FINANCIAL MOVIE IMPACT

Why do you ask for donations – don't the movies make you a lot of money?

We do not get paid on movie ticket sales. The movies have done a lot for our organization by generating awareness of our work and bringing more people to see us. All funds we generate go toward our nonprofit work and allow us to expand the reach of our mission.

Why can't the money from the movie pay for bigger pools?

Indirectly the awareness from the movie has allowed our team to move into a phase of construction that will enhance all animal habitats. We do not get paid on movie ticket sales. However, the movie has done a lot for our organization by educating people about our work and bringing more people to see us. We have built numerous new pools and related animal care equipment and infrastructure since the movie came out.

DOLPHIN TALE 2

Is the second movie all true?

It's important to remember that the movie is "inspired by true events" but is not a completely true story. Many parts of the movie are based on real life events, but there are also elements that are fictionalized.

Was Winter depressed?

Winter was not depressed. She lives an enriched life at CMA. She is learning new behaviors and continuing behaviors she enjoys.

Was Winter in danger of leaving CMA for another facility?

There was never any danger of having Winter moved to another facility. Winter was paired with Panama, and Hope joined us while Panama was alive. All three lived together in the Winter Zone. When Panama passed away, Winter and Hope had already been paired.

Is it against USDA regulations to keep dolphins alone?

Dolphins can be alone if the animal is not compatible with others and if it is in the best interest for the health and well being of the animal. This determination is made by the attending veterinarian in consultation with the animal care staff and experts.

Who decides if an animal can be released?

CMA works with National Marine Fisheries and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to determine if an animal can be released. It is not a decision we make alone.

Did Winter ever hurt anyone?

No staff members, volunteers or guests have ever been injured by any of our dolphins. However, we must keep in mind that Winter and all of the animals here are wild animals.

Do pelicans and turtles interact in the wild?

No, pelicans and turtles do not interact in the wild.

Did you really take a turtle to a human hospital?

We do work closely within the medical industry particularly around medical services such as x-rays, CAT scans, and MRIs.

Did Hope react badly to Winter when they were first paired?

No. In reality, Winter and Hope got along the first time they were introduced. They accepted each other immediately.

Did Hope have to be desensitized to Winter's prosthetic tail?

No, Hope did not have a problem with Winter's tail. It was introduced in a controlled manner.

Why doesn't Winter jump like in the movie?

Because of Winter's injury, she is unable to jump. Naturally a dolphin's tail would propel her up through the water but due to Winter's condition, she can not jump.

It seems Mandy was played by Nicholas in the movie. Mandy is shown catching her own fish – can Nicholas catch his own fish?

Nicholas was deemed non-releasable as he was a dependent calf and his mother never taught him that skill. At CMA we feed all of our animals restaurant quality food.

Where can we find Mavis?

Mavis is represented by our resident turtle Harold, who suffers from vision impairment. After a series of tests conducted at the University of Florida, we discovered Harold's brain does not interpret information correctly. Consequently, he was deemed non-releasable.

The movie has a lot of young volunteers. My daughter is 13, can she volunteer?

You must be at least 15 to volunteer and the specific age depends on the department. We have several areas for volunteering and we hope to have you/her involved once she meets the age limit.

Is there a Dolphin Tale 3 coming out?

We have amazing stories here at CMA and we're always open to opportunities that can help spread our message.

Was there really a Mandy?

CMA did rescue a bottlenose dolphin named Mandy several years ago. She, along with another bottlenose dolphin Troy, stranded themselves in Clearwater. CMA treated both dolphins for upper respiratory infections. Mandy also had an eye infection which was treated. After 14 weeks, both Mandy and Troy were released back into the wild.

How come Hope's noises sound different from the movie?

What you hear / see at CMA is the real life Hope. Keep in mind there are parts of the movie that are fictionalized and changed from real life.

Overall

Why can't you release the animals that are at CMA?

The resident animals at CMA are unable to be released due to their lack of survival skills and need for continuous care.

What do you do with the money you make/cost of admission?

The revenue we generate goes towards our mission of rescue, rehabilitation, release and public education. Everything we do at CMA is for the betterment of our animals while educating the public.