

# INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

## INTERNATIONAL REVIEW PANEL

### 37<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA (USA)

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### DOCUMENT IRP-37-11

## INFORMATION ON SETS WITH ORTZA RELEASE

At its 36<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Panel asked the Secretariat to review the data collected on ortza releases and to present a report at the next meeting, when the Panel would decide whether to recommend releasing the ortza as an acceptable procedure for releasing dolphins in place of backdown.

Currently, cases of ortza release are dealt with by the Secretariat and IRP as follows:

- If there was a malfunction that made normal backdown impossible, the IRP does not refer the case to the government concerned, and recently such cases have not been presented to the IRP for review;
- If the captain completes an ortza release form, the case is not referred to the IRP;
- Otherwise, the IRP considers the case on its merits.

It should be noted that the historical database does not include a specific field to indicate ortza release. Sets with probable ortza release were identified from other information, such as the reason a set was aborted. Because of the interest in the issue, the database has been modified to include this item.

### 1. SETS WITH ORTZA RELEASES

The table below shows the number of sets with capture of marine mammals in which the ortza was released, from 1993 to April 2004. Only data from the IATTC database are included, although national observer programs reported one additional ortza release set in 2001 and two in 2002.

	All sets				Sets without an associated malfunction		
	Total sets	Sets with ortza release	%		Total sets	Sets with ortza release	%
1993	4,421	13	0.29	1993	3,457	11	0.32
1994	4,992	8	0.16	1994	3,954	6	0.15
1995	5,203	16	0.31	1995	4,217	8	0.19
1996	5,354	1	0.02	1996	4,460	0	0.00
1997	6,006	15	0.25	1997	5,022	8	0.16
1998	7,360	13	0.18	1998	6,282	12	0.19
1999	5,962	6	0.10	1999	4,971	4	0.08
2000	5,699	10	0.18	2000	4,886	10	0.20
2001	5,180	1	0.02	2001	4,392	0	0.00
2002	7,087	7	0.10	2002	6,145	4	0.07
2003	7,697	5	0.06	2003	6,799	1	0.01
2004	2,704	1	0.07	2004	2,416	1	0.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,665</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>57,001</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>0.11</b>

The table on the left compares all sets identified as sets with ortza release to all sets with dolphin captures, and the table on the right shows only those sets without malfunctions. The situations are distinguished because, in sets with malfunctions, there may have been no alternative to releasing the ortza. In the rest of this document, only sets without malfunctions are considered.

## 2. MORTALITY COMPARISONS

The rate of dolphin mortality per set (MPS) is affected significantly by a number of factors, and thus comparisons of mortality in sets with and without ortza release should be made after adjusting for those factors. Factors that contribute significantly to increased dolphin mortality include net canopies and net collapses, captures of large amounts of tuna and/or dolphins, and longer backdowns. Sets with net canopies and/or collapses were excluded from the comparison of mortality per set rates for sets with ortza release and sets with backdown. In addition, for sets with ortza release, sets in which backdown was also performed and sets with any catch of tunas were excluded, on the grounds that backdown and tuna catch in an set with ortza release are likely indicative of other complicating problems.

If the comparison is limited to complete years only, a total of 42 sets with ortza release between 1993 and 2003 was available for analysis. Each year was analyzed separately, in order to take account of the decreasing trend in mortality per set over this 11-year period. The results are shown in the table below. Since it is not known how much tuna might have been in the net before the ortza was released, the average mortality per set in sets with backdown, but no tuna catch, is also presented.

	Sets with ortza release		Total sets		Sets with no tuna catch	
	MPS	No. sets	MPS	Sets without mortality (%)	MPS	Sets without mortality (%)
1993	0.0	7	0.272	88.8	0.102	95.8
1994	0.0	4	0.272	88.2	0.130	95.7
1995	0.0	6	0.236	89.7	0.036	97.8
1996	-					
1997	0.0	3	0.173	91.3	0.139	93.5
1998	0.375	8	0.107	93.0	0.038	96.7
1999	0.0	2	0.102	93.5	0.153	93.7
2000	0.0	7	0.096	93.9	0.049	96.7
2001	-					
2002	0.0	4	0.075	95.7	0.000	100.0
2003	0.0	1	0.069	95.8	0.090	96.8

The data in the table suggest that, for the few sets with ortza release, the mortality per set was less than the fleet average, except in 1998. However, sets with ortza release do not appear to be a random sample with respect to other factors that are known to affect dolphin mortality, and the number of such sets is too small to further limit the comparison. For example, the average number of dolphins in the herd encircled in ortza release sets was 127, compared to 486 for the fleet as a whole. Mortality per set has been shown to increase with increasing herd size, but in only four of the 42 sets with ortza release was the herd greater than 400 animals, so it is impossible to determine how herd size might affect the mortality per set in such sets when larger numbers of dolphins are encircled. Mortality per set varies with dolphin species, and the species composition of the herds in sets with ortza release differs from that the fleet as a whole: on average, 33% of the sets without ortza release involved spinner dolphins, compared to 43% of the sets with ortza release. However, as indicated in the following table, so few sets with ortza release are made on each dolphin species that an analysis by species is impossible.

	Species composition of herd			
	Spotted	Spinner (pure or mixed)	Common (pure or mixed)	Other
1993	2	4	1	-
1994	3	1	-	-
1995	1	4	-	1
1997	2	-	-	1

1998	2	4	2	-
1999	-	1	-	1
2000	2	1	1	3
2002	1	3	-	-
2003	1	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>

### 3. CONCLUSION

With the data collected during 1993-2003 there are too few sets with ortza releases to determine whether the practice should be accepted as an alternative to backdown as a means of avoiding dolphin mortality.