



## **Rescue Hotline:**

**Sanctuary – 053 942 4980**

**or 24/7 Emergency - 087 1955 393**

## **Have you found a seal in Distress in Ireland?**

Seals are well adapted for spending time on land and at different times of the year often come ashore for rest, mating, pupping and nursing. Depending on the circumstances it is perfectly normal behaviour for seals to be alone on the shore. However, if you find a pup alone and in distress your actions can mean the difference between life and death for the pup.

What to do if you find a seal pup...

### **1. Do NOT attempt to put back into the water**

As tempting as it may seem, the seal is out of the water for a reason. There may be a mother nursing the pup who is in the water and will return later. Grey seal pups have a white fur coat which can become waterlogged and therefore they normally stay ashore for the first 3 weeks until they moult.

If the pup is orphaned, sick, or injured putting it back in the water may inadvertently kill it.

### **2. Observe from a distance**

Seal pups are often unafraid of people and will not attempt to move into the water if approached. The seal's mother, however, will not return to retrieve or feed her pup if humans are present. Human disturbance can result in the mother abandoning her pup. Keep your distance and keep dogs and children away from it.

### **3. Do not touch**

Seals are wild animals and WILL bite! Not only is a bite painful, but it can also carry infectious diseases. The mother may also reject the pup if it is handled as its scent will be different once handled.

### **4. Do not attempt to feed**

Un-weaned pups have sensitive stomachs and should only be on mother's milk. Attempting to feed them anything else will likely result in being bitten and a very sick pup!

## **5. DON'T ignore the situation**

If there is a problem, there are a number of things you may see:

### *Abandoned:*

If you see a seal with a white, fluffy coat in the autumn/winter, or you see a small seal (less than 3 feet in length) alone between June and August, then it is probably still suckling from its mother. Check the sea regularly for any sign of an adult seal.

### *Thin:*

Signs of malnutrition include visible ribs, hips and neck and perhaps baggy and wrinkled skin.

### *Sick:*

Signs of ill health include : coughing, sneezing or noisy, rapid breathing and possibly thick mucus coming from the nose, wounds or swellings, particularly on the flippers, and possibly favouring one flipper when moving (although remember that healthy seals will often lie and 'hunch along' on their sides) cloudy eyes, or thick mucus around them, or possibly one eye kept closed most of the time, a seal showing little response to any disturbance going on around it (although remember they could be soundly asleep).

Even healthy looking pups may need assistance if they have been separated from their mother in a bad storm or if they have ventured into a dangerous situation (eg. on to a road). Sometimes first time mothers may give birth during the night and by day the beach is heavily populated with people and dogs and she will be frightened away and abandon the pup.

If you find a seal matching any of these descriptions or even if you are unsure, PLEASE contact us!

## **6. Contact the Seal Rescue Ireland...**

Courtown Seal Rescue Centre: 0539424980

24/7 Emergency: 087 1955 393

You will receive further advice over the phone. If there is a problem with the animal, there are some important things you can do to help:

**Provide information:** Give us an accurate description of the seal and its exact location on beach, beach name, nearest town, county, tidal conditions etc. If at all possible, stay on the beach to guide the rescue team to the animal. This can save valuable and perhaps critical time. If you have a mobile, give the number to the volunteer.

**Control disturbance:** Stop other people and their animals from approaching the seal.

**Prevent small seals from entering the sea:** Stand between a pup and the sea. Under no circumstances allow anybody to push the seal back in the sea. A pup still suckling is a poor swimmer and an older animal may be hauled out for good reason.

*Thank you!*