FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rescued Sea Lion Deemed Non-Releasable Finds Home

Sea lion rescued and rehabilitated by Pacific Marine Mammal Center finds forever home at Blank Park Zoo, Iowa.

Laguna Beach, CA Thursday, February 13, 2020 - Meatball, a female California sea lion rescued and rehabilitated by Pacific Marine Mammal Center (PMMC) who was deemed non-releasable, found it's forever home at Blank Park Zoo, located in Des Moines, Iowa.

Meatball was rescued by PMMC's rescue team on Jan 24, 2019 from Laguna Beach at only 24 pounds. She was admitted and treated for deep puncture wounds, an upper respiratory tract infection, malnutrition and dehydration. Her rehabilitation throughout the coming months proved difficult as she was not showing any progression for certain basic behavioral criteria.

"Due to her inability to dive and compete in a small pool after over 6 months of rehabilitation in conjunction with being able to eat only small herring by hand and in accordance with NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) standards for release, Meatball would not be a good candidate for release back to the wild," said Dr. Kristen Sakamaki, PMMC Veterinarian.

After months of searching PMMC, in partnership with the NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS), found an extraordinary institution in the Blank Park Zoo where Meatball will live out the rest of her life.

"We are grateful for our partnership with PMMC and the important work they undertake saving, conserving and rehabilitating marine mammals. While it is unfortunate that 'Meatball' can not be released back into her natural habitat, we are thankful to PMMC for the opportunity to give her a permanent home. She will become an ambassador for our oceans, educating our guests on the importance of conserving our oceans and natural resources," said Shannon McKinney, director of animal care at Blank Park Zoo. 'Meatball' will also become a great companion to our other female sea lions, 'Zoey' and 'Addy,' and our three harbor seals, 'Ross,' 'Meru' and 'Monty.'

Since 1971 PMMC has rescued almost 9,000 seals, sea lions and other marine mammals. In those 49 years, PMMC has placed 30 pinnipeds at zoos, aquariums, and wild animal parks all over the country that would not have otherwise survived on their own in the wild.
Meatball (in front) shortly after rescue January 2019.

Meatball before transfer to forever home, January 2020.

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About Pacific Marine Mammal Center

The Pacific Marine Mammal Center rescues, rehabilitates and releases marine mammals and inspires ocean stewardship through research, education and collaboration. Pacific Marine Mammal Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our Tax-ID number is: 95-3680896

20612 Laguna Canyon Road | Laguna Beach, California, 92651 | (949) 494-3050

Media Contact PMMC: Krysta Higuchi

Title: Events and Public Relations Coordinator
Media Contact Blank Park Zoo: Ryan Bickel
Title: Public Relations
Phone: 515-974-2512
Email address: msbooth@blankparkzoo.org