SEA SHEPHERD
FRANCE

Why Loro Parque is not a suitable location for Wikie & Keijo

A document prepared for submission to the French Ministry of Ecological Transition
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Overview

Loro Parque on Tenerife Island, Canary Islands, Spain, refers to itself as a modern zoo, but includes a wide variety of wild animal shows for entertainment. At the time of writing it held three orca (2 captive born males and 1 wild-born pregnant female). Loro Parque has been proposed as a location to house the two orca (1 female Wikie, along with her male son Keijo born 2013) from Marineland Antibes, France. The French facility has stated that they have done no maintenance on their orca tanks since 2022 and that the tanks are now in such a state of disrepair that they can no longer hold the orca. Furthermore, they have stated that their two orca require a larger social network.

This report outlines some of the reasons why Loro Parque is not a suitable location for the two French orca. These include unprecedented levels of aggression by the orca at Loro Parque – to each other and to humans. For example, the aggression between the orca at Loro Parque is illustrated by observations documenting that one female was >100 times more likely to be attacked than any orca in a similar study at a Canadian facility. Another of the orca at Loro Parque is one of the most bitten orca of any held in captivity, worldwide.

Two of the orca held at Loro Parque have attacked and/or killed a trainer at the facility. One of these orca had a father who killed a trainer at SeaWorld USA. Loro Parque has used the individual who killed a trainer for breeding three previous calves and for the current pregnancy.

The orca originally at Loro Parque were shipped there not only for use in an entertainment show for the paying public, but also as part of a breeding loan, as evidenced by signed documents between the owners of Loro Parque and SeaWorld USA. Three calves have been born there, with a fourth on the way as of 23 March 2025. All three calves at Loro Parque were taken away from their mothers to be hand-raised. Two of of the calves born at Loro Parque died shortly after birth. One was born deformed. The surviving calf is inbred.

There is an extremely low survival rate for orca at Loro Parque – with the average life expectancy approximately half that of an orca in the wild, despite the facility providing health care, food and removing all threats such as boat strike, oil spills and predation.

Although it has been proposed that Wikie and Keijo could go to Loro Parque as an interim measure, this is not a viable solution. The case study of Morgan the orca, is a clear warning for the French Government that previous assurances that involved the Spanish Government held little to no weight and that violations regularly occur.

Given the urgency of the situation, with Marineland Antibes stating that they are going to transport the orca to Loro Parque before the 15th of April 2025[1], the examples given herein are not all-encompassing.

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[1] As stated by the Manager of Marineland Antibes in the meeting on the 4th of March 2025, to those in attendance, including the Ministry of the Environment staff.

Figure 1. Morgan, the wild-born orca for who Loro Parque does not have a permit to use her in a commercial show, appearing in a show on 12 February 2025. She has been used in such a commercial setting since shortly after arriving at Loro Parque, despite the Netherlands Government not authorizing this (see details in Section on Breaches of Laws & Agreements + Repatriation of Cetaceans).

1. Dysfunctional Group / Aggression

Extreme amounts of aggression between the orca have been documented at Loro Parque. For example, Morgan a female wild-born orca was transferred to Loro Parque in order for her to have 'social company'. Using standard animal behaviour research protocols, whereby an individual is visually followed (termed 'focal animal follows', see Altmann 1974), Morgan was observed at Loro Parque for 77 hours and 16 minutes (i.e., 3.2 days). During that time frame an unprecedented 91 aggression events were documented, all involving Morgan who was attacked in each instance. A similar study, looking at aggression in a facility holding orca captive in Canada, recorded only eight aggressive episodes for all the orca and over a much longer period of 78 days (1,872 hours).

To put this into perspective, Morgan was attacked, on average, more than once an hour. The other study recorded an aggressive episode only once every 234 hours. Morgan was >100 times more likely to be attacked at Loro Parque than any of the other orca in the Canadian study.

During one of the aggression events documented at Loro Parque, Morgan was rammed so hard that she was partially lifted out of the water – see Figure 2.

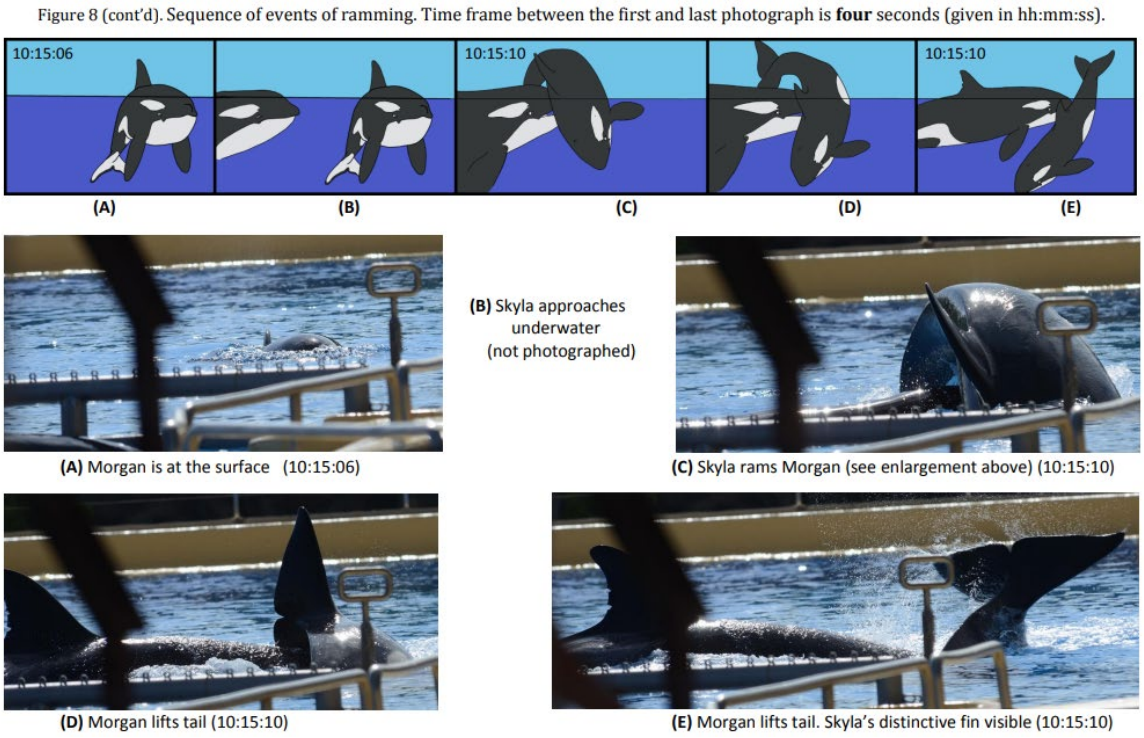

Figure 2. A timeline strip of the photo sequence and the photographic evidence of the ramming behaviour. Figures extracted from Visser (2012).

Further aggression is reported in Marino et al., (2019), Visser (2012), Visser and Lisker (2016). Of note that a study by Loro Parque (Sánchez–Hernández et al., 2019), looking at social

interactions described only 2% of behaviours as aggression. The disparity between these studies is likely linked to the former three being conducted by researchers who are familiar with wild orca behaviour, compared to the latter who are primate researchers or who are only familiar with captive orca behaviours.

Responses from Loro Parque about aggression are likely to include:

- The social structure has changed since Morgan was first introduced.
- There was no 'true aggression', what Visser observed was only 'sorting out of hierarchies'.

However in rebuttal to these alternative views:

It is important to recognise that the social structure was dysfunctional at Loro Parque when Morgan arrived and it remains dysfunctional – no amount of time changes the fundamental facts about each orca which impacts the social structure of the group. To give just a few details:

In the wild, there is no evidence to suggest that wild orca social systems are based on aggression to establish hierarchy. Rather the social placement of the mother, alongside a mutual respect for others in the group, appears to be the norm in establishing and maintaining hierarchies. In a typical wild orca society, the oldest individual is a matriarch (i.e., a female).

Conversely, at Loro Parque currently the oldest orca is an adult male known as Tekoa. Having a male as the oldest animal immediately creates a dysfunctional social structure. However, Tekoa was not always the oldest – rather he was the youngest until the calves were born at Loro Parque. He was the victim of intense aggression at Loro Parque. Photographs show him covered in bite marks (rake marks) from the other orca at Loro Parque (Figure 3). He is the most raked orca in captivity in the world. He has suffered two broken ribs that are likely the result of aggression (see further details in the section on Dental Disease & Other Injuries).

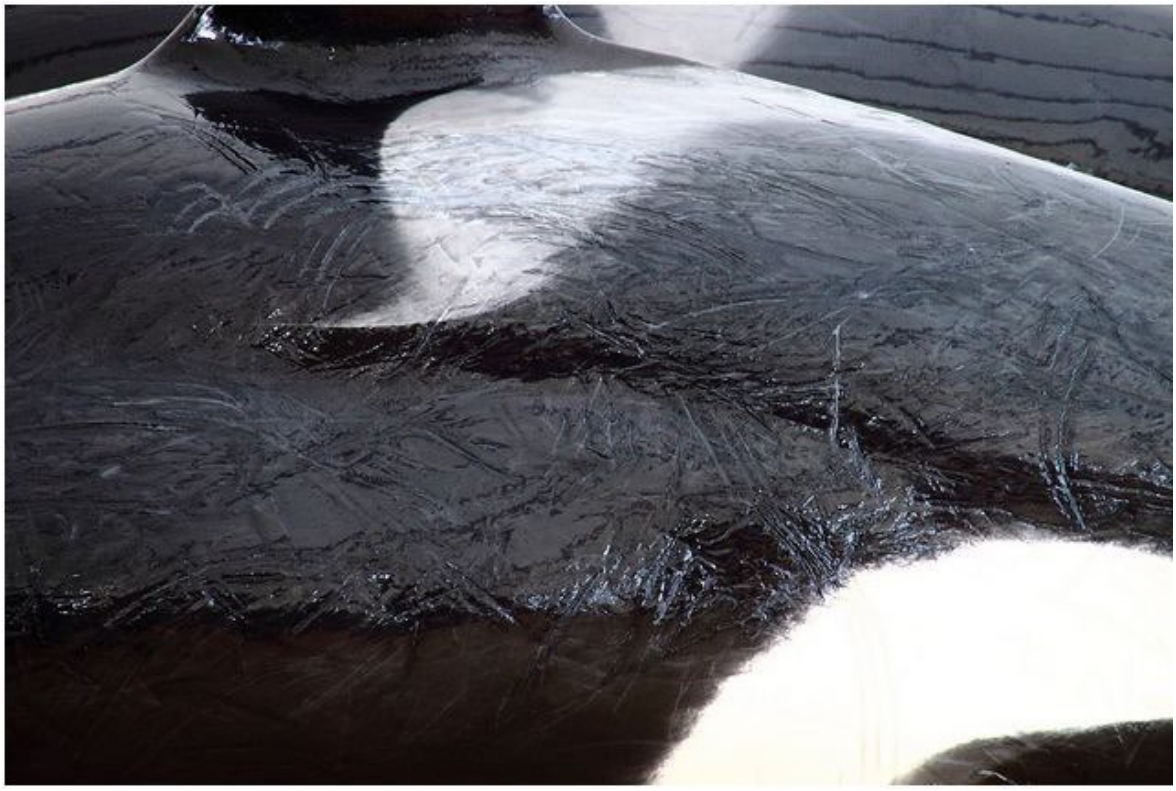

Figure 3. The extensive rake (teeth) marks from the other orca at Loro Parque on Tekoa, who is now the oldest orca at Loro Parque.

It is important to understand a little of Tekoa's history to put his current 'role' in the group into perspective. He was born at SeaWorld Orlando, Florida, USA. His mother was Taima, a captive-born hybrid orca, whose parents were from an Atlantic Icelandic fish-eating population and a Pacific Transient mammal-eating population. In contrast, his father was Tilikum, an Atlantic wild-born Icelandic fishing-eating orca. Of note is that Tekoa's father, Tilikum, killed his trainer at SeaWorld Orlando in 2010. Tilikum was the feature of the documentary Blackfish, where his pattern of behaviour (having previously killed two other people) was described. Despite this history, SeaWorld repeatedly used Tilikum, who was a known human-killer, for breeding which may explain his son Tekoa's later aggression towards people (see below).

Tekoa's mother, Taima, began displaying aggressive behaviour towards him a few months after his birth and they had to be separated permanently after several attempts to reunite them failed. Again, this type of aggression is not something that typically happens in orca society and neither is separation – even in those populations where males naturally separate from their mothers, this is done at a much older age and typically post puberty.

Tekoa was shipped from the USA to Loro Parque in 2006, when he was only six years old. He was one of four orca shipped to Loro Parque (see Appendix of extracted table from supplemental materials of Marino et al., 2019) under a 'breeding' loan from SeaWorld (see document bundle accompanying this report).

Tekoa is one of the orca that is described in the investigative article "Blood in the Water" (Zimmermann 2011). In that in-depth article, the author describes how in October 2007 Tekoa attacked trainer Claudia Volhardt. "*…. Tekoa grabbed Vollhardt's arm and took her to the bottom of the pool. He then dragged her toward the steel gate between the show pool and the back pools and began banging her against it.*" … [another trainer] "*managed to haul her up onto the pool deck. He immediately began CPR*" … "*her wetsuit, covered in bite marks and blood, was cut away,* [and she was] *rushed by ambulance to the intensive-care unit of the hospital in La Laguna. She eventually recovered, after surgery on her lacerated and broken arm*." (Zimmermann 2011). Keep in mind that CPR is only done on people who are not breathing and have no heartbeat – i.e., Tekoa killed Claudia, but human efforts brought her back to life.

The aggression at Loro Parque is not limited to Tekoa and Morgan. Morgan was required to protect her previous calf Ula from aggression at Loro Parque by Adán, the son of Keto (recalling that Keto was the orca who killed trainer Alexis Martinez). Loro Parque, on their official website, described one incident with the calf; "*Adan is low in hierarchy, so he is a bit rough with* [Ula]." https://archive.is/sx2lV). Ula subsequently died on 10 August 2021 from intestinal torsion.

Given that Morgan is due to give birth soon (as stated by Dr Almunia on 17 Feb 2025, at the Orca Symposium, Tarifa Spain), the new calf will be subjected to this dysfunctional group. Furthermore, introducing two orca into Loro Parque will add more stress to the existing animals and create higher risks for the soon-to-be-born calf. The impacts on the two orca who will be imported cannot be overlooked either. Despite the desire to create a wider social group for the two French orca, there is absolutely no guarantee that they will become socially integrated if introduced. They may be attacked like all the existing individuals, become ostracised and be placed under excessive stress due to this (e.g., see Marino et al., 2019).

It is worth noting that Wikie's older sister, Shouka is still alive. It is feasible to reunite Shouka with her younger sister Wikie, moving them both, along with Keijo, into a sanctuary. Like Wikie, Shouka was born at Marineland Antibes, but she was exported to the USA in May 2002. She has lived at two Six Flags facilities; Cleveland Ohio and Vallejo California. She was then moved to SeaWorld San Diego in August 2012, where she remains to this day

2. Breeding

Three calves have been born at Loro Parque (Adán, Vicky, Ula) and only one has survived (Adán). Morgan is currently pregnant with the calf due to be born in late March 2025. The father of all these calves[2] (including the as yet unborn calf) is Keto. Recalling that Keto is the male orca who killed a trainer at Loro Parque in 2009.

[2] Official blog by Loro Parque confirming the father of Ula is Keto https://archive.is/g2adC

It is a red flag that all three of these calves were separated from their mothers and hand reared (Visser et al., 2021). They were each kept isolated for months, in a very small tank measuring only 4.2x7.1x12.4 m. Concerns for this were raised with the Dutch Government, prior to their issuing the permit to move Morgan to Loro Parque, i.e., as early as 2011 (Visser, 2011)[3]. These concerns were ignored and Morgan herself was kept isolated for hours in this small medical tank. Then when her own calf was born at Loro Parque it too was separated and kept isolated in this tank.

Loro Parque has recently stated that they will continue to breed orca at their facility (Dr Almunia at the Orca in Captivity Workshop, Tarifa Spain, 17 Feb 2025, as part of the 5th International Orca Symposium, with a recording of this statement available upon request). The two French orca are protected by French Law which bans them being used for breeding.

Even if Loro Parque states that they will not breed Wikie and Keijo, the structure of the tanks would make it difficult to keep the sexes separated during ovulation periods of the females. Moreover, the past records of the facility speaks for themselves. As one example, following on from SeaWorld USA announcement on 17 March 2016, that it would stop breeding orca at all of its facilities (which at the time included Loro Parque), the official statements from Loro Parque regarding their opinion of the breeding ban stated:

"*....permanent prevention of the reproduction of wild animals under human care is an action that goes against the very cycle of life and well-being of the animals*.", going on to misrepresent the mandatory EU requirement that a zoological park must breed the animals, by stating that "*it is one of the principal functions and obligations of the zoological park to ensure that the right to reproduction is respected and well-being is properly ensured*".[4]

What Loro Parque fails to put forward is that a 'breeding plan' can be to not breed. It also entirely ignores all the other 'rights' of the animals which it has completely removed from it, such as the right to hunt and food share, to swim a normal distance, to dive a normal depth, to socialise with individuals of its choosing, to choose any aspects of its life at all. Furthermore, it ignores that a number of facilities in Europe, who fall under the same EU law have single-sex collections of cetaceans and that others do not breed their animals.

Loro Parque violated that breeding ban and Morgan became pregnant. Apparently this occurred 'through the gate' (McBride 2019), illustrating that Loro Parque have limited or no control over the breeding of their animals.

As further evidence of the issues regarding breeding, in a legal case against Loro Parque, Dr Almunia and the then head of orca training both independently stated that Morgan was not pregnant, when in fact she was at least six-months pregnant. It is inconceivable that a responsible facility would not be aware of a pregnancy at this advanced stage (i.e., she had

[3] Letter sent to the Dutch Ministries responsible for marine mammal transfers, included in document bundle.
[4] https://archive.is/jmcw8

completed her first trimester). Therefore, it is worth considering that the care for Morgan at Loro Parque was so poor that they didn't know. This is important to consider if Wikie is to be transported to Loro Parque. The failure of the facility to provide adequate health care for Morgan is deeply concerning. See https://archive.is/cvRnD for a detailed breakdown of issues about Morgan's pregnancy and links to orca pregnancy timeline details.

The Dutch Government reacted to Morgan's first confirmed pregnancy with "*It may have been an accident. I can't imagine. Although with these animals, that would be a pretty big accident*." (quote by Folchert van Dijken the then Dutch Policy Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, who issued permit to capture Morgan for rescue, rehabilitation and release, as stated in the Dutch Investigative TV show Zembla, October 2021[5]) Figure 4.

This investigative TV show finished with Dr Javier Almunia, Director of Loro Parque Foundation stating "*It's [Morgan] a female, and she was living with a group of males, so it's quite easy to predict that she will be pregnant in the future*." (Dutch Investigative TV show Zembla, October 2021).

Figure 4. Screen-shot from the Dutch documentary about Morgan, by Zembla. Mr Folchert van Dijken the then Policy Officer for the Ministry of Agriculture, who issued permit to capture Morgan for rescue, rehabilitation and release.

The case study of Morgan is important to consider if the French Government believes that a 'contract' with Loro Parque will ensure that Wikie is not bred or that Keijo will not breed with Morgan. Loro Parque has broken contracts with SeaWorld USA when it comes to breeding, violated best-practises for health care of pregnant orca and ignored restrictions on the CITES export Transaction Specific permit for Morgan.

When breeding occurs with Wikie, Loro Parque will likely use Tekoa as the sire, recalling that he is the son of a human-killer (Tilikum) and he has also attacked a trainer himself. An outline of some of the other attacks by Tekoa and the other orca at Loro Parque is given in the table

[5] English version available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyFIbmFcuqM – Last accessed 09 March 2025.

extracted from Marino et al (2019) and included in the document bundle accompanying this report.

As noted above, Morgan is now pregnant again, with what is her second confirmed calf. Given that the ban on breeding by SeaWorld was implemented due to concerns regarding welfare, such breeding would be clearly a compromise of welfare for any female held at Loro Parque as well as any resulting offspring.

Furthermore, in the previous pregnancy and during the current one, Morgan was made to perform behaviours in the choreographed shows which fall outside the best practises set by SeaWorld for pregnant orca. For example, see Table 1. Of note is that Morgan was documented performing stage slides, slideouts and other behaviours that must be eliminated under best practises, when it was less than 2 months before she was due to give birth. These behaviours should be eliminated at 8 month and 6 months prior to parturition.

Loro Parque was requiring Morgan to perform these behaviours on multiple days during February (Figures 5-10) and in multiple shows on each day. These behaviours were required of Morgan purely for the entertainment show for the paying public and not for medical or other health reasons.

Table 1. Behaviours which Morgan was required to perform, when best practise Standard Operating Procedures from SeaWorld exclude them for pregnant orca. The number of months prior to parturition are indicated. Extracted from court acquired documents from SeaWorld, with the original document included in the document bundle accompanying this report.

SeaWorld SOP's for orca behaviours to be eliminated prior to parturition	Number of months prior to parturition this behaviours must be eliminated	Morgan performed this behaviour ~**2 months** prior to parturition
stage slides[6]	8 months	(Figures 5-10)
Slideovers[6]	6 months	
Slideouts[6]	6 months	
high jumps[7]	6 months	(Figure X)
spyhops (low criteria)	0 months	(Figure 1)
spyhops (high criteria)[8]	0 months	(Figure X)

[6] Note that 'stage slides', slideovers' and 'slideouts' are similar behaviours, however the location varies and the direction can vary – e.g., a slideover goes in one direction over a low area between tanks, whilst the stage is typically at the back of the show tank and the slideout platform is in front of the paying audience.
[7] A behaviour trained at Loro Parque, but not described in the SeaWorld table is a variation of the high jump. It is is a vertical high jump with a violent head shake during which the orca keeps its mouth open and tongue extended so that the tongue flops outside the mouth from left to right during the jump. This behaviour is high-energy and is called 'the alien' by Loro Parque (see Visser 2012 for further descriptions and examples).
[8] Note that spyhops (high criteria) are not listed in SeaWorld elimination behaviour list, however given that 'low criteria' spyhops were, one must assume this behaviour must also be eliminated.

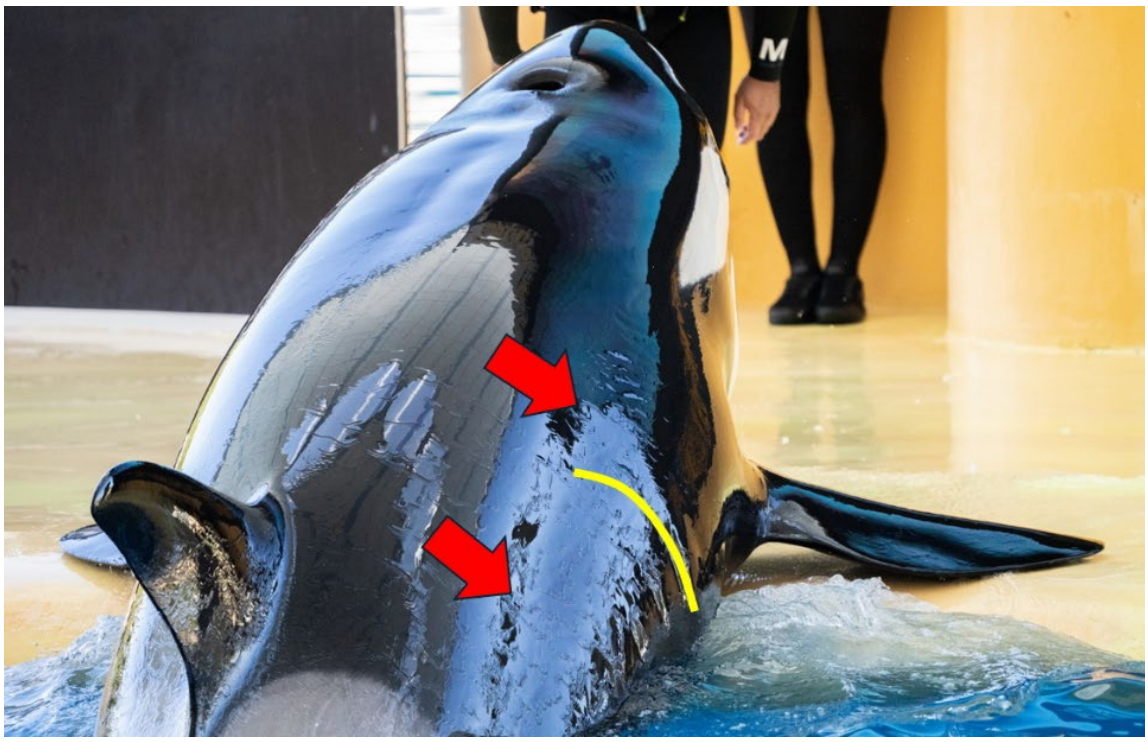

Figure 5. Morgan starting a stage slideout. The pressure on the fetus, from Morgan rolling her body over the edge of the stage, is against best practise. It is noted by SeaWorld USA as a behaviour that should be eliminated 8 months prior to parturition. Morgan is already 6 months **past** that critical date when this photograph was taken on 12 February 2025. Note the distortion of her body due to this behaviour (curved line) and the arrows indicating the distortion line along her thorax and abdomen.

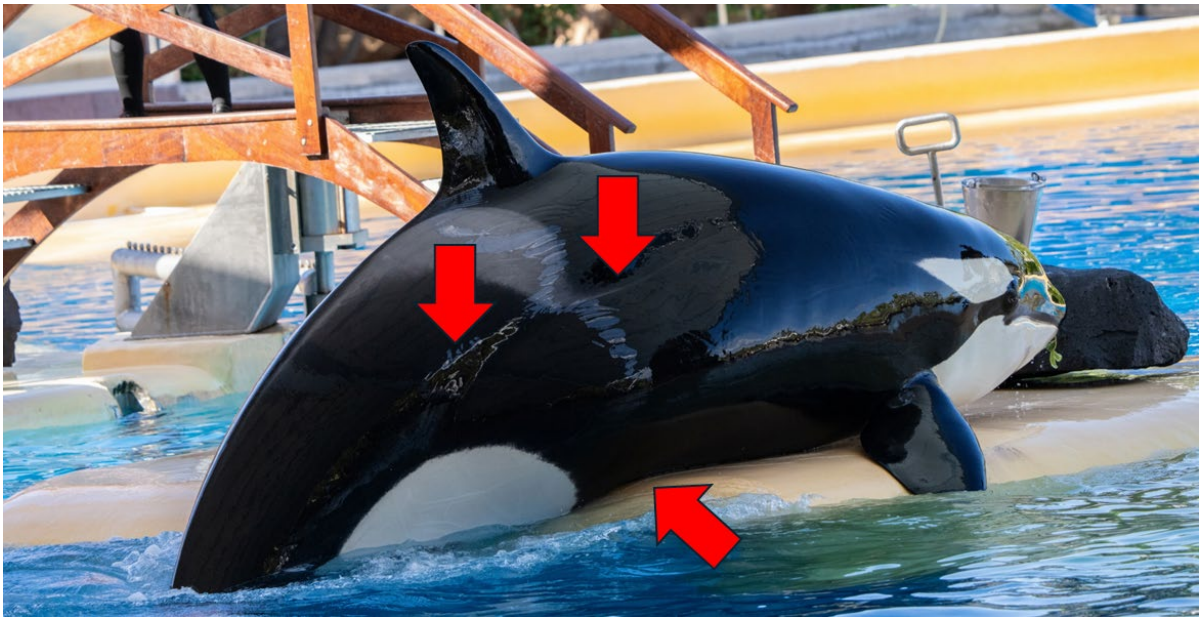

Figure 6. Morgan performing a stage slide (i.e., actively moving along the stage) in a separate behaviour to that illustrated in Figures 5 and 8. This image was also taken on 12 February 2025, when Morgan was due to give birth in less than 2 months. The extent of her pregnancy is visible as indicated by the arrows which show the distortion of her body.

Figure 7. Morgan performing a slideout in front of the paying audience on 15 February 2025. Note the distortion of her body due to this behaviour (curved line) and the arrows indicating the distortion line along her thorax and abdomen. Morgan is approximately 15 months pregnant at the time this photo was taken. Behaviours like this should be stopped at least 9 months pregnancy (i.e., 8 months prior to parturition).

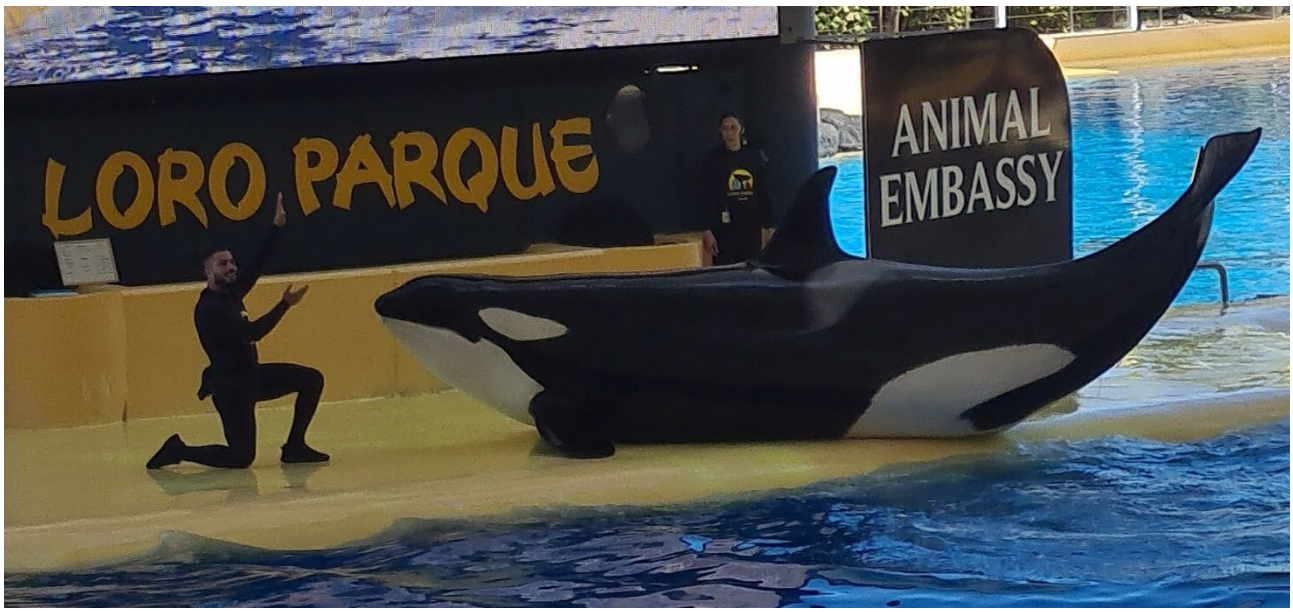

Figure 8. Morgan performing a stage slideout, with her tail raised high. Note that this behaviour should be eliminated at 6 months prior to parturition. Morgan is approximately 2 months prior to giving birth when this photo was taken on 13 February 2025.

Figure 9. Morgan performing a ‘bow’ (also may fit the criteria for a ‘front dive’ (both are high criteria) during a performance at Loro Parque on 12 February 2025. SeaWorld best practices eliminate front dive behaviour 6 months prior to an orca giving birth. Morgan is due to give birth within 2 months (i.e., she is at least 16 months pregnant when this photo was taken). Note the ‘robust’ body shape of Morgan due to being heavily pregnant.

Figure 10. Morgan performing the 'alien' (high criteria) during a performance at Loro Parque on 12 February 2025 (left) and 13 February 2025 (right).

3. Dental Disease & Other Injuries

Teeth & Dental 'Health'

The orca at Loro Parque have extremely damaged teeth. Visser and Lisker (2016) explain in detail the teeth of the orca who were alive at the time of their research (April 2016). Appendix 1 shows the teeth in 2025.

Dr Javier Almunia from Loro Parque, stated on 17 Feb 2025, at the International Orca Symposium in Tarifa Spain[9], that "*there is no scientific evidence that links dental health* [tooth damage] *to welfare*" – this is despite extensive evidence of the nerves and roots in these animals' teeth and pain they would experience during events such as drilling teeth, tooth infections and broken teeth). See the sections in the official USA Court filing about orca teeth in Visser (2019a). Furthermore, there are sufficient publications regarding dental health in captive cetaceans to clearly link tooth damage and other dental diseases health issues and therefore compromised welfare. For example, in a case study of an orca by Graham and Dow (1990) cavities created intense vascularization, inflammation and eventually a systemic focus for infection. This trauma correlated with an elevated white blood cell count.

In a study looking at 29 captive orca, tooth damage was assessed and more than 60% of mandibular teeth 2 and 3 exhibited fractures. Bore holes were observed more than 61% of

[9] Video of this presentation is available upon request to www.orcaresearch.org

mandibular teeth, with teeth 2 and 3 bearing evidence of having been drilled (Jett et al., 2017). David Perpiñán, speaking at the Orca in Captivity Workshop on 17 February 2025[10], explained that such procedures for orca are typically executed without anaesthetic and rarely are analgesics (pain relief) administered prior, during or after the teeth are drilled.

The roots of drilled teeth often remain viable for extended periods, indicative that these teeth would be sources of extreme pain for the orca, prior to drilling as well as post the treatment.

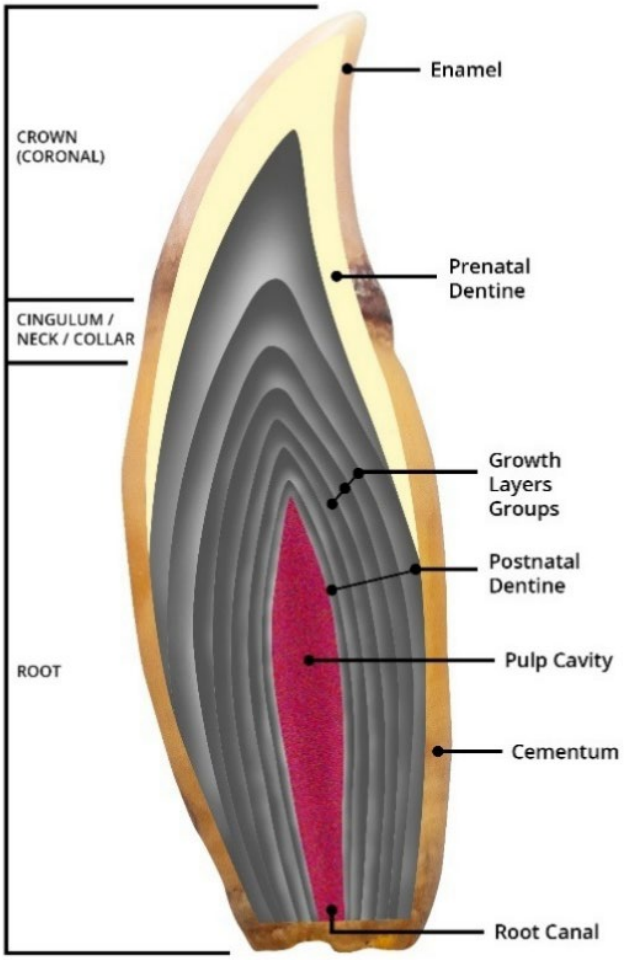

Figure 11. A schematic of an orca tooth, showing the amount of tooth that must be worn to expose the pulp (nerve / root tissue). See Appendix 1 which illustrates the extreme wear on the teeth of the orca at Loro Parque.

[10] Video of this presentation is available upon request to www.orcaresearch.org

Figure 12. A photo composition showing the depth that an orca's tooth (in this case tooth L 6) sits in the jaw. Note the three foramen (holes) at the left end of the mandible – these are holes for the nerves that are in the jaw and are connected to the roots of the teeth. These nerves (and those of the teeth) indicate the pain paths that an orca would experience during dental damage and dental disease.

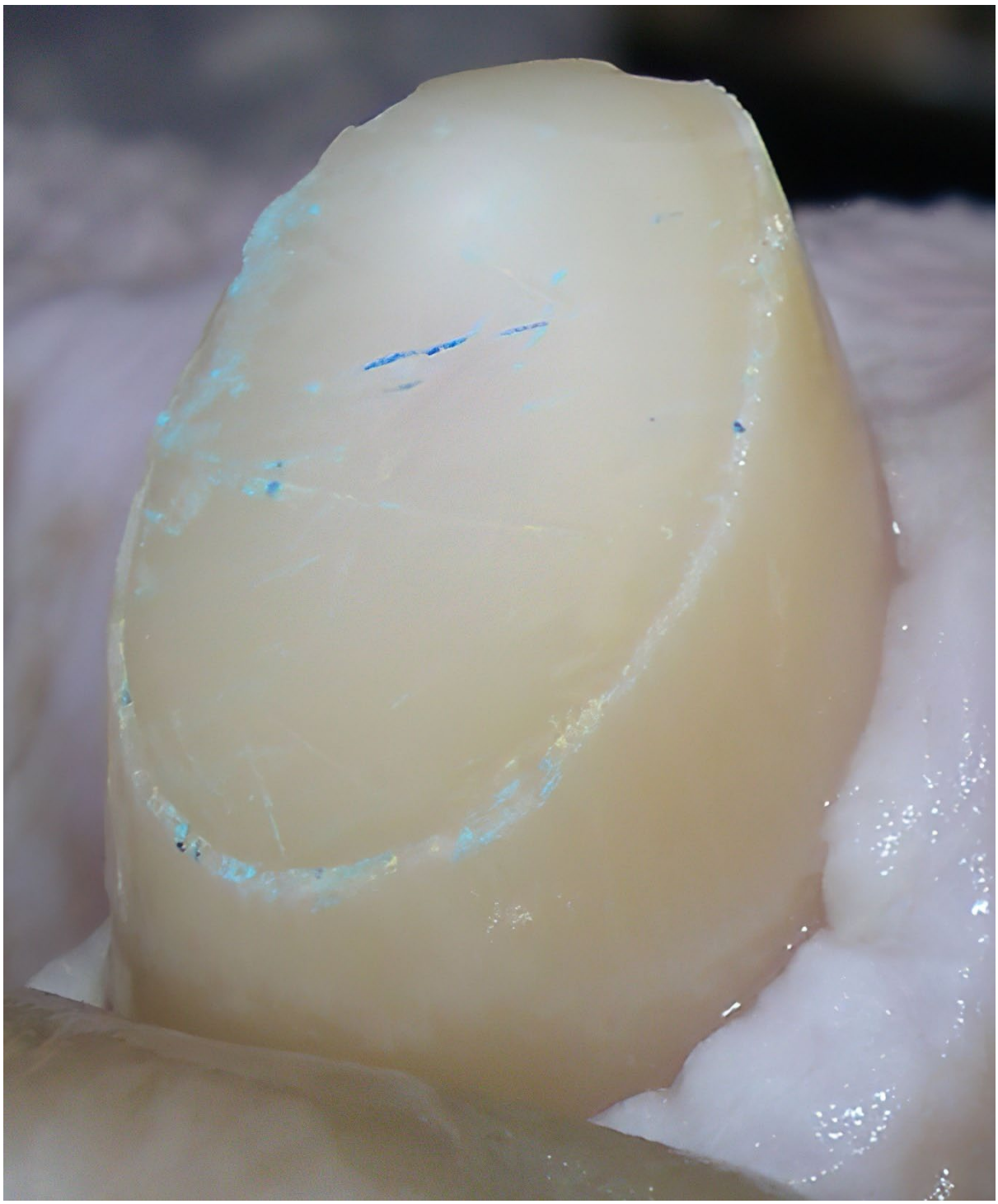

Figure 13. An extreme close-up of Morgan's tooth, showing the blue and yellow paint from the concrete tank at Loro Parque, the worn surface and the chipped edges of the teeth. This is despite Loro Parque claiming that they have 'the most modern tanks with rounded edges to prevent tooth damage'. See Figure 15 for an illustration of the source of this blue and yellow paint at Loro Parque's orca tanks.

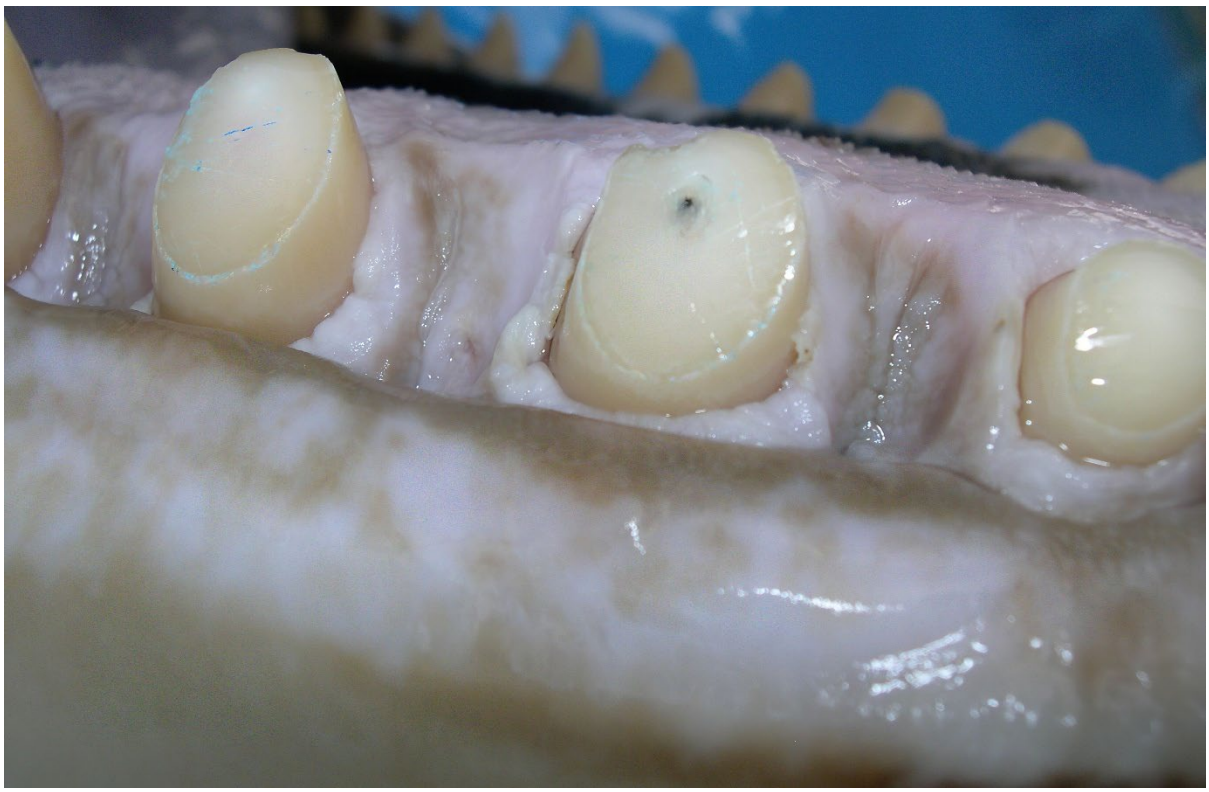

Figure 14. Extreme tooth wear on Morgan the orca, held at Loro Parque. Note also the discoloured and sunken gums and the damage to the gums around the central tooth. The black 'dot' in the central tooth is the pulp (root) of the tooth that has been exposed due to a significant portion of the tooth being worn off from chewing on the concrete tanks. Also note the broken inner edge of this same tooth.

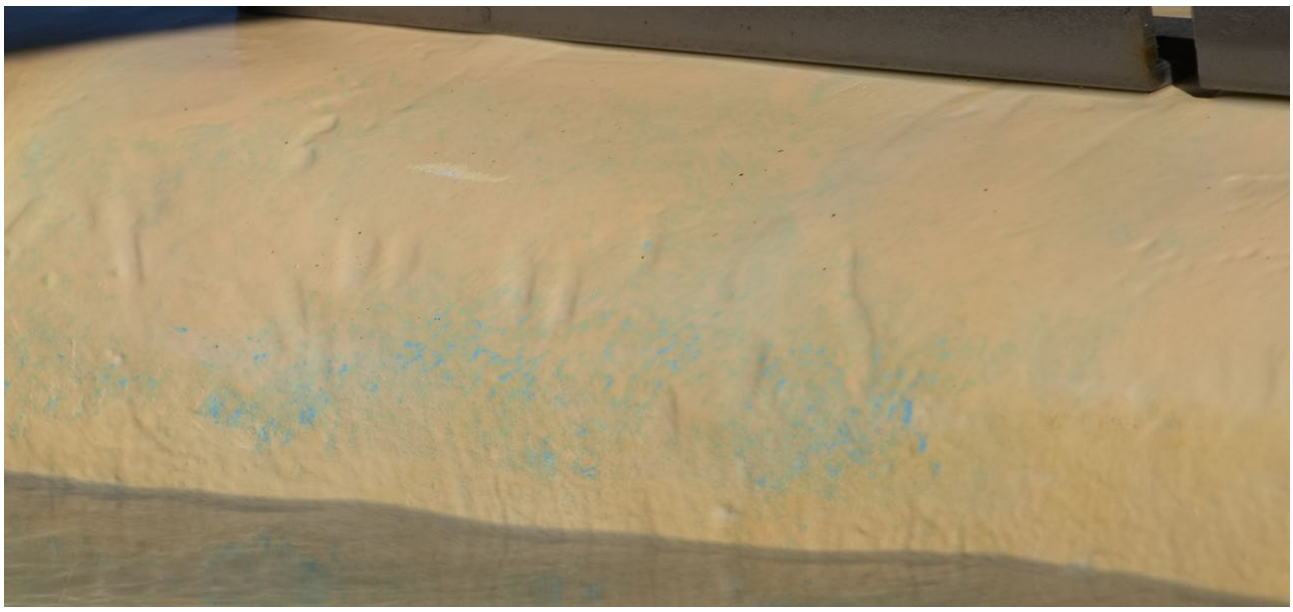

Figure 15. Close up of the edge of one of the tanks at Loro Parque, taken 13 Feb 2025. Additionally, below the water line the tank is painted blue.

Deformities of Morgan's calf Ula

Former trainers of orca, who worked at SeaWorld in the USA published an online article describing the deformities of Ula (https://archive.is/wip/Bnuny). Figure 16 shows the head deformity and Figure 17 shows another angle of her deformed head and her deformed and diseased left pectoral fin. Additional images and information are given in the link above.

Despite this evidence, in an official posting on Loro Parque's website of 15 July 2020, following the question "Are there any abnormalities with Ula, her health or her growth whatsoever?, Loro Parque replied "*As stated before, everything is normal*" (Official Loro Parque website https://archive.is/sx2lV).

Figure 16. Two images from the Voice of the Orcas website (https://archive.is/Bnuny), run by former SeaWorld trainers. The image on the left shows a calf of approximate the same age as

Ula, and the shape of the melon is outlined. That same shape is imposed on the image on the right, of Ula, illustrating the lack of melon and the overall deformation of her head.

Figure 17. Two images from the Voice of the Orcas website (https://archive.is/Bnuny), with the upper image showing Ula upside down and her deformed and diseased left pectoral fin above the water. The lower image shows another example of how the melon of the calf is missing.

Tekoa's broken ribs

In a veterinarian conference, the Loro Parque vet presented a case study of a male orca (Tekoa) with broken ribs (Lacave et al., 2021). The poster from this presentation is included in the document bundle. It is of grave concern that the facility did not identify that Tekoa had a broken rib prior to December 2017, when it was first discovered. However, of even deeper concern is that 1.5 years later another broken rib was identified – and again this had not been discovered when it was first broken. Tekoa was performing in shows, expected to do high-energy behaviours such as breaches (coming clean out of the water) and to slide out of the water onto the concrete platforms.

Additionally, the aetiology of the breakages was not identified by the veterinarian. There are only a few logical assumptions to be made as to the cause of these injuries – (a) Tekoa was rammed by another orca during one of the frequent aggression events at Loro Parque, (b) Tekoa injured himself during exercise, training or shows or (c) Tekoa has weak bones due to nutritional deficiencies. Naturally a combination of these factors could be at play as they are not mutually exclusive.

However, regardless of the cause that a captive orca has two sets of broken ribs and these are not identified, and he is made to perform shows while injured is unacceptable and yet another example of why Loro Parque is not a suitable facility for Wikie and Keijo.

4. Breaches of Laws & Agreements + Repatriation of Cetaceans

Breaches of Laws & Agreements

The case study of Morgan the orca, who was taken from the wild under a 'Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release permit is a clear warning for the French Government that assurances between Governments, particularly those that involve the Spanish Government hold little to no weight and that violations regularly occur.

Morgan was previously held at Dolfinarium Harderwijk and then transferred to Loro Parque in Spain. She is perhaps the most documented orca in the world – with thousands of pages written about her, including a dedicated website (www.freemorgan.org) hosting hundreds of documents and links. Scientific and legal peer-reviewed papers as well as reports have been published about the situation with Morgan and it cannot be emphasised enough how egregious the situation is (e.g., see the following for some examples Spiegl et al., 2019, Spiegl & Visser 2015, Trouwborst 2015, Trouwborst et al., 2013a, Trouwborst et al., 2013b, Vester & Samarra 2011, Visser 2012, Visser & Lisker 2016). She has been used for commercial purposes and breeding, despite what the Netherlands Government wanted. Henk Blecker worked for the Ministry which issued her transfer permit, and he stated the following in the Dutch Investigative TV show Zembla, which aired in October 2021[11]

Henk Bleker: [00:22:40] She.was.not.going.to.be.used.in.shows. *She was intended mainly for education and research resources*.
(Zembla: but that happened within a few months)
Bleker: *They did do that later, yes*.
(Zembla: Wasn't there something you could do?)
Bleker No?.no?.no?.no?.no?.no *That's up to local authorities* [Spain][12] [Emphasis added]

[11] English version available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyFIbmFcuqM – Last accessed 09 March 2025.
[12] Original in Dutch: **Henk Bleker:** [00:22:40] *Ze zou niet voor shows gebruikt worden. Ze zou met name voor educatie en onderzoek middelen worden ingezet.*
(Zembla: maar dat is wel gebeurd binnen enkele maanden)
Bleker*: Dat is later wel gebeurd ja.*
(Zembla: kon u dan niet ingrijpen?)
Bleker.*Nee, nee, nee, nee, nee, omdat dat dan een verantwoordelijkheid is van de autoriteiten ter plekke [Spanje]*

The most disturbing aspect of Morgan's case is that Loro Parque have used her for breeding, despite the Netherlands Government sending her to the Spanish facility strictly for research and not for breeding. Folchert van Dijken, who also worked for the Ministry which issued her transfer permit, stated the following in the Dutch Investigative TV show Zembla, which aired in October 2021.

Folchert van Dijken (00:39:57) *It was clear she [Morgan] would be used further for education, for scientific research. Things you can learn. That's science, that's knowledge.* But.definitely. not.for.breeding¡..Certainly.not*[13][Emphasis added].

Despite more than three years of an ongoing court case with the Spanish Authorities, the Spanish Government has failed to act on the fact that Morgan is used for commercial purposes without an appropriate permit (i.e., she is used in shows illegally). Such a delay is even more concerning when the Spanish court initially recognised that the facts from the proceedings make it possible to presume the existence of a criminal offense.

At the recent Orca in Captivity Workshop, held in Tarifa, Spain, at the 5th International Orca Symposium, Matthew Spiegl a lawyer specialising in EU Law for cetaceans presented details about the failure of the Spanish Government to address the issue[14]. The ongoing issues are outlined in Spiegl & Visser (2025) – another presentation from the Symposium, which is included in the document bundle.

Repatriation of Cetaceans

A number of examples exist where cetaceans have been loaned to other facilities and their repatriation has been extremely difficult or the attempt to retrieve them has been abandoned by the owners. Even at a Government level any control of the animals, once they have departed their originating country, is null and void.

For example, the USA Government Authority National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is one of the Authorities in the USA associated with captive cetaceans. It admitted, over two decades ago, that it "*has no jurisdiction over the* [marine mammal] *animals once they are exporte*d …" (66 Fed. Reg. 35209, 35213, 3 July 2001). Subsequently, NMFS reiterated that "*once animals are outside of the United States, NMFS cannot control reporting, tracking, monitoring or enforcement of permit conditions*." March 2010 Scoping Document on Marine Mammal Permit Regulations (archived at https://archive.is/T36yB).

[13] Original in Dutch: Folchert.van.Dijken.(66¿9❺¿❶❸).*Het was duidelijk dat zij verder gebruikt zou worden voor educatie, voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Alles wat je kunt leren, noem dat wetenschap, dat is kennis, maar niet voor voor de voortplanting. Zeker niet!*

[14] Spiegl (2025). Video of this presentation available from info@freemorgan.org

In another example, an attempt was made by the USA Brookfield Zoo, to force the Portugues Lisbon Zoo to return dolphins on loan from them. But this failed despite the involvement of the US State Department and two pregnant dolphins were abandoned and left in poor conditions (https://archive.is/pu9wz).

Using an example of an orca, in 2011 SeaWorld USA had to take MarineLand Niagara Falls Canada to court,[15] in order for the owner (SeaWorld) to get a male orca back who had been loaned to the other commercial facility. SeaWorld had identified that the orca was held in sub-standard conditions, was undernourished and in ill health (Tomkins 2008) but the Canadian company refused to return him. SeaWorld only obtained the animal after a lengthy international court case (Cornell 2011, Visser 2019b).

5. Commercial Use

The monetary value of an orca in captivity should not be underestimated. They have been described as worth "1 million" US$ in a 2017 article[16], 'priceless' (https://archive.is/pu9wz). and worth US$ millions (Zembla documentary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyFIbmFcuqM). The main source of wild-caught orca (Russia) is no longer available due to law changes. Currently, breeding within and between facilities is the only way to access orca.

Therefore, despite the law in France protecting them, if Wikie and Keijo are shipped anywhere other than a sanctuary (where breeding is prevented to avoid creating further suffering), their value for breeding is incalculable. However it can be estimated to be in the vicinity of hundreds of millions of dollars over the duration of their lives. Captive orca, alongside some high-value race horses, are the most valuable animals in captivity around the world.

Furthermore, baby orca are used extensively for marketing purposes, bringing in additional revenue (Spiegl & Visser 2015, Visser 2012, Visser et al., 2021). For example, Brad Andrews, the then senior vice president of zoological operations for SeaWorld stated this about newborn orca in a 2004 article "*We have a high percentage of repeat visitors that really come back because they want to see little baby Shamu* [the orca] *that was born five weeks ago*, *they want to see it six months from now or a year from now.*" (https://archive.is/pu9wz).

As given above, the case study of Morgan the orca who was shipped to Loro Parque under a strict permit, the Netherlands Government stated in the Zembla documentary that she was not to be used for shows.

[15] Seaworld Parks & Entertainment LLC v. Marineland of Canada Inc., 2011 ONSC 4084. Court File No. 52783/11. Ontario Superior Court of Justice.
[16] https://archive.is/V3GJo

Henk Bleker: [00:39:31] The animal was exported for research and education. The idea was not to take her there for shows etc[17].

6. Other Points

The Ethics of Breeding a 'Deaf' orca.

Orca are a highly social species. They are also a species which has evolved over millions of years to be an acoustically orientated species and it has long been recognised that sound is a key sensory input for these animals. These aspects are all intrinsically intertwined and as such their ability to communicate with each other is critical and also vital for maternal bonds.

Loro Parque claims that Morgan is deaf. It is therefore both ethically and morally irresponsible of them to have bred Morgan when she will never be able to communicate properly with her calf. The calf has been produced purely for commercial purposes and yet it will suffer its' entire life as it will not be able to communicate effectively with its' mother.

Survival Rates of Orca at Loro Parque

In 2019, Marino et al published a peer-reviewed manuscript about stress for captive orca. This publication is included in the document bundle attached to this report. In the supplemental material of Marino et al., (2019) is a table outlining details of the then seven orca who were alive (Adán, Keto, Kohana, Morgan, Skyla, Tekoa, Ula) and the one dead calf (Victoria/Vicky). That table is included as a separate file in the document bundle with this report.

Of note is that Keto, Kohana, Skyla and Ula have all subsequently died at Loro Parque. An assessment of the life expectancy results in an age of only 25 years[18] – less than half that of an orca in the wild. This is despite Loro Parque providing health care, food and removing all threats such as boat strike, oil spills and predation.

[17] Original Dutch: *Het dier zou voor onderzoek en educatie kunnen worden, gebruikt zeg maar. Het was niet de bedoeling om het daar naartoe te brengen voor shows enzovoort*.

[18] A table providing the details of this calculation is included in the document bundle accompanying this report.

Appendix 1. Only three of the seven orca who were documented at Loro Parque in 2016 were still alive in 2025. The damage to the teeth of these three (Adán, Morgan, Tekoa) presented here.

Adán

Figure 1.1. Some of the left (top) and right (bottom) damaged teeth of Adán, an orca born at Loro Parque. Note the holes are not 'natural' and are the result of drilling by the staff at Loro

Parque. The roots of these teeth often remain viable for extended periods, indicative that these teeth would be sources of extreme pain.

Morgan

Figure 1.2. Morgan's left mandible. Note that teeth L1-3 are nearly, or compeltey, worn to the gums. L7 is broken (see Figure 1.4 for a view of this tooth in 2016). The blue block is gelatine, given to the orca to increase their hydration as their food is insufficent to supply them enough water.

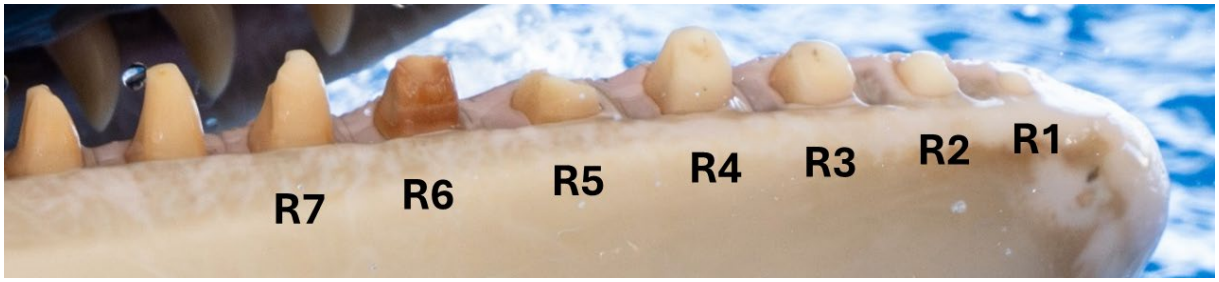

Figure 1.3. Morgan's teeth in 2025. Note that tooth R5 has been destroyed (see split tooth in 2016, Figure 1.4). Tooth R 4 is now drilled open and sits higher than R3 and R 5. Tooth R6 is discoloured, indicating it is compromised, noting that in 2016 it was already broken and missing part of the tooth (Figure 1.4X). Tooth R7 is also missing part of the tooth, in this case on the posterior portion of the tooth (see Figure 1.4 for a view of this in 2016).

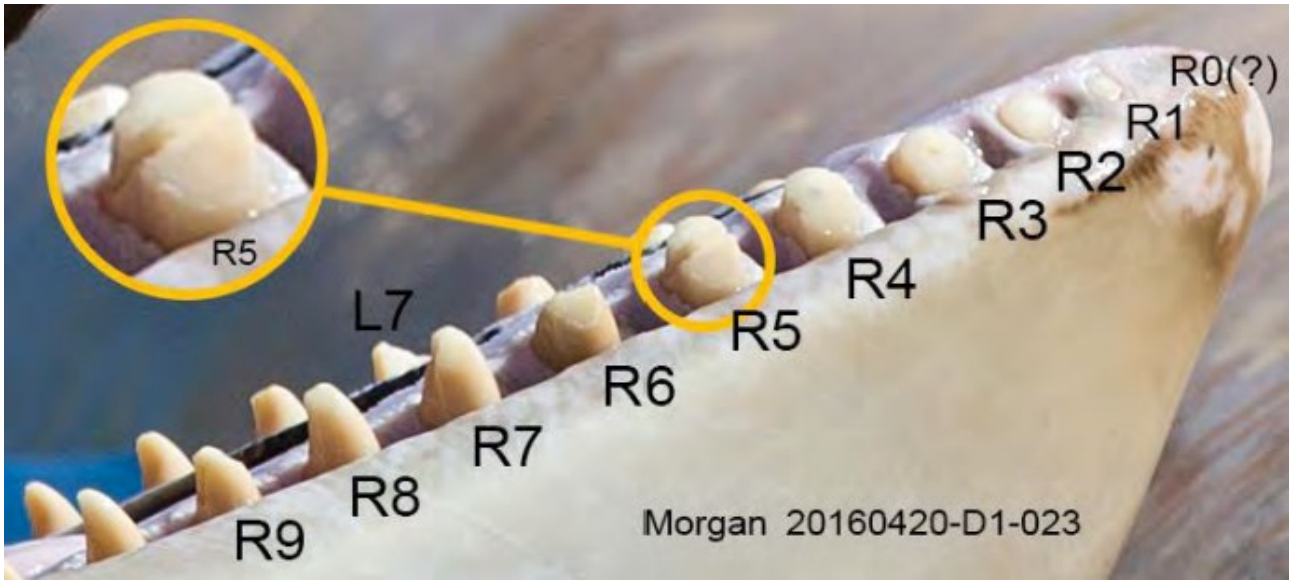

Figure 1.4. Morgan's teeth in 2016, showing tooth R5 which was split in half. Tooth R6 is laos missing a section on the inside of her mouth.

Tekoa

Figure 1.5. The left (top) and right (bottom) teeth of Tekoa, taken in February 2025 at Loro Parque. Note the drilled, chipped and broken teeth. Also the gums are sunken around the teeth, which is not normally seen in wild orca.

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