



Cetaceans

GUIDE FOR TAKING PHOTOS OF STRANDED TO DETERMINE BODY CONDITION

When a cetacean strands, body condition is one of the most important factors that we need to consider when deciding whether to trial a refloat or not, as it's such a critical indicator of health. Poor body condition suggests an animal is suffering from a chronic illness and/or injury which has most likely impeded its ability to forage, and euthanasia is warranted.

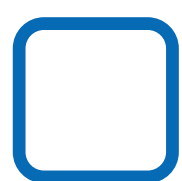
Judging a stranded cetacean's body condition can be difficult, even for experienced eyes, and we ask that Medics send photos of the animal to the Hotline Coordinator as soon as possible to assist with assessment via our consultant vets and expedite welfare decision making. As these photos may be used to help guide a refloat decision, they are very important.

The photos need to be taken from certain angles to ensure they most accurately represent the animal's body condition. There are four angles that are particularly useful and should be taken with the animal in sternal recumbency (lying on its front).

REMEMBER: Routine health and safety procedures should be observed at all times (e.g. wear an FFP3 mask if near the blowhole and avoid proximity to the tail).

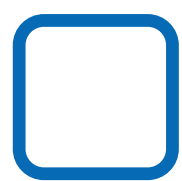


PHOTO CHECKLIST:



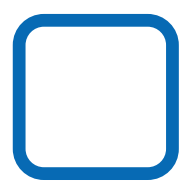
Head side-profile

A side-on photo of the head taken from down at the animal's level, including everything in-front of where the pectoral fins join the body. The aim is to show the profile of the head (a dip behind the region of the blowhole indicates poor condition).



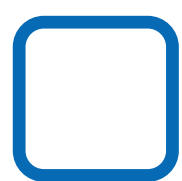
Front-to-back view

Crouch in front of the animal head on and take the photo from down at their level, aiming down the length of the animal. The aim is to show the profile of the muscles beneath the dorsal fin.



Back-to-front view

Crouch behind the animal's tail (keeping enough distance to avoid being hit if the tail moves) and take the photo from down at their level, aiming down the length of their body. The aim is to show the profile of the muscles beneath the dorsal fin.



Birds-eye view

(possible only in smaller cetacean species) - take a photo from above the animal, including as much of the body as possible but focusing on the area around the dorsal fin if the animal is very long. The camera needs to be angled straight down at the animal, with the dorsal fin in the centre.

Head side-profile

A side-on photo of the head taken from down at the animal's level, including everything in-front of where the pectoral fins join the body. The aim is to show the profile of the head (a dip behind the region of the blowhole indicates poor condition).

Good quality photo, taken at the animal's level and demonstrating well the profile of the animal's head from the side.

To improve the photo, the Medic could have taken it from a position slightly further forwards and in line with the head.

Photo taken from too high an angle, looking down onto the dolphin's head, so the exact outline of the dolphin's side profile is not clear enough.

The whole eye should be visible, with the blow hole sitting right at the top, in line with it's side profile.



Good quality photo, taken at the animal's level and demonstrating well the profile of the animal's head from the side.

**However, the attending Medic's should have been asked to pause pouring water on the animal for a moment while it was taken, to avoid their hands obstructing the shot*



STRANDED CETACEAN PHOTO GUIDE



Front to back view

Crouch in front of the animal head on and take the photo from down at their level, aiming down the length of the animal. The aim is to show the profile of the muscles beneath the dorsal fin.

An excellent quality photo. This animal's body condition is very poor- there is a visible dip/concavity in the musculature.



Low quality photo, taken at the animal's level but from an angle so low down that we can only see the profile of the animal's head, not it's back.

The animal's body condition cannot be accurately assessed from this photo.



Excellent quality photo, taken at the animal's level and demonstrating well the profile of the muscles beneath the dorsal fin. This animal's body condition is good- the musculature is well rounded.

Back to front view

Crouch behind the animal's tail (keeping enough distance to avoid being hit if the tail moves) and take the photo from down at their level, aiming down the length of their body. The aim is to show the profile of the muscles beneath the dorsal fin.

Low quality photo, it needs to have been taken from much further down at the animal's level in order to see the profile of the musculature beneath the dorsal fin.



Good quality photo, taken down at the animal's level and demonstrating well the profile of the musculature beneath the dorsal fin.

Bird's eye view*

Take a photo from above the animal, including as much of the body as possible, but focusing on the area around the dorsal fin if the animal is very long. The camera needs to be angled straight down at the animal, with the dorsal fin in the centre. *Only possible in smaller cetacean species.

Moderate quality photo, ideally would be angled from directly above the animal (so the dorsal fin was in the centre and you could see the left and right sides of the body equally).



Good quality photo, demonstrating well the shape of the animal's body from directly above. The dorsal fin is in the centre and you can see the left and right sides of the body equally.