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OPEN LETTER TO SEAWORLD & HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

15 July 2016

Joel Manby, President and CEO
SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment
9205 South Park Center Loop, Suite 400
Orlando, FL 32819

Wayne Pacelle, President and CEO
Humane Society of the United States
2100 L St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Mr. Manby and Mr. Pacelle,

On 17 March 2016, you made an announcement in partnership that shook the very foundation of the marine theme park industry, setting in motion the beginning of a gradual phasing out of the commercial display of killer whales in captivity.

On 22 March 2016, the Free Morgan Foundation sent you a joint letter asking to meet with us and to join in a conversation about our ongoing concerns for the welfare of Morgan and the other killer whales held in captivity at Loro Parque.

We wrote to you with heartfelt optimism for a cooperative future. We believed that your newly formed alliance and commitment to killer whales – ending breeding, highlighting their natural behavior in more natural settings and their humane treatment – in the SeaWorld facilities in California, Texas and Florida, and at Loro Parque as well, was sincere.

For a brief moment, a new era of collaboration between the marine theme park industry and animal welfare and rights organizations was on the horizon. It was a moment in history that you and your respective organizations needed to seize with conviction and purpose.

Sadly, that conviction has wavered. Almost immediately after your alliance was formed, SeaWorld attacked the ideal of one day retiring its killer whales to seaside sanctuaries. For its part, The Humane Society chose not to take a principled stand for the welfare of the killer whales, many of which may remain in captivity for 30 or more years.

Over the course of the last two months, Morgan has once again gained international attention and drawn public awareness and outrage over the welfare issues facing killer whales held in captivity.

Two recent viral videos show Morgan at Loro Parque ramming her head into a heavy metal segregation gate while being confined in a small medical tank and show her “hauling-out” onto the main performance stage for an extended period after a show. This was, in our experts’ opinions, an attempt to escape the aggression of SeaWorld’s captive-born killer whales, who regularly harass the wild-born Morgan.

The stories of these two events spread across social media and received mainstream coverage, including National Geographic, Time, People, The Dodo, Sky News and Daily Mail. Loro Parque has gone to great efforts to try to spin the story about Morgan, claiming that she is healthy and doing well in captivity and that the recent videos show normal behavior. However, in fact, they are quite alarming.

In addition, the contents of the Free Morgan Foundation’s new report graphically depicts the dentition of all six killer whales held at Loro Parque. The compromised welfare of these killer whales is evident even to the casual observer. The images of the teeth in the report speak for themselves. They are graphic, indisputable and universally recognizable as “painful” to any person who has had a cavity, chipped, broken or lost a tooth, or had a tooth drilled by a dentist.

In our letter to you on 22 March 2016, we noted that Dr. Visser would be in Europe in April and she offered to meet with you at Loro Parque during that visit. The Humane Society quickly wrote back acknowledging receipt of our letter and telling us that a definitive answer would be forthcoming within a week – but this response never came. As for SeaWorld, there was complete silence.

We continue to hope that you will acknowledge your responsibility to address directly the compromised welfare of these six killer whales. We ask that you take the action necessary to remedy the immediate and longer term welfare issues at Loro Parque and for your pledge of a long term commitment to working with us to return Morgan to the ocean in a controlled, natural environment.

As previously indicated, the Free Morgan Foundation is ready to engage with you in order to work together to fulfill your and our commitments to protecting Morgan and ensuring that her rights are respected. We look forward to your response.

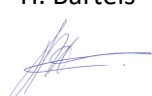
Sincerely,

Dr I. N. Visser (PhD)



Chair &
Scientific Adviser

H. Bartels



Vice-Chair

T. M. Hardie



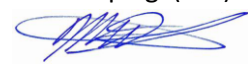
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