

Aquarium News and Updates

Saturday, February 8, 2014

Eye surgery for harbor seals

Harbor seals in aquarium settings often *live far beyond their natural life expectancies* in the wild, but like aging people, they can suffer from similar chronic medical conditions like cataracts. The vision of *Reggae* and *Chacoda (Chuck)*, two adult male harbor seals, had deteriorated in recent years as the milky cloudiness in their lenses increased and reduced their fine vision. Both 200 pounders remain very active and know dozens of behaviors, but they had become more dependent on hearing the verbal commands of their marine mammal trainers rather than seeing their hand signals.



Reggae (bottom) and Chuck are doing very well following cataracts surgeries.

Aquarium veterinarians consulted local veterinary ophthalmologist, Dr. Ruth Marrion of *Bulger Veterinary Hospital* in North Andover, who has been donating her services since 2007. She was concerned with the potential for further deterioration and the development of other eye diseases. She recommended the cataract surgery and assembled a surgical team. After Aquarium staff set up a temporary operating room in a seal holding area, Dr. Marrion and a surgeon from Florida successfully removed both seals' cataracts.

Eye surgery for harbor seals



After two weeks of convalescence in a dry environment, Chuck and Reggae have returned to their exhibit pool and adapted well.

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Reggae has been trained to look up and stay still so that trainers can administer the eyedrops.

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Local media were also on hand for this photo op!

Check out the beautiful images on [Boston.com](#)
See a slideshow of the surgery on [WCVB Channel 5](#)

There's a wealth of information on the blogs about how we take care of Aquarium animals:

[Roxie](#), a Northern fur seal with cataracts, gets a checkup

[Here's](#) how training works with animals with poor eyesight

[Here's](#) how you train a seal to receive eye drops

[Even](#) fish in the GOT sometimes need to get eyedrops

[Recently](#) a rescued sea turtle visited a vet for special diagnostic exams

[Now](#) that you know about the special care and treatment these animals receive to keep them happy and healthy, look for them during your next visit to the Aquarium!

Posted by NEAQ at 8:22 AM

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