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The Crocodile Hunter Says G'Day to The Marine Mammal Center

Animal Planet's Steve Irwin learns pinniped medicine from The Center's staff for new television series

(SAUSALITO, Calif. – November 22, 2004) Steve Irwin, better known as the Crocodile Hunter on Animal Planet television, paid a one day visit to The Marine Mammal Center on November 21. He and his crew are in the process of filming a new television series called *The New Breed Vets* in which the Sausalito-based hospital will be featured in a segment on California sea lions. Irwin interviewed Dr. Marty Haulena, The Center's veterinarian, on the innovative advances in electroencephalogram (EEG) technology The Center uses in helping to treat California sea lions with domoic acid toxicity. The disease is a biotoxin found in some fish, a popular food source for California sea lions. If undetected, the biotoxin can be fatal. Dr. Haulena, along with Dr. Kenneth Laxer of California Pacific Medical Center, performed an EEG to measure brainwave activity in two adult sea lions that have experienced seizures caused by the disease. Additional segments filmed at The Center will be completed on November 22. The new series is scheduled to air early 2005.

"It was wonderful being able to show Steve how we're able to apply our advanced medical techniques in order to save a patient's life," said Dr. Martin Haulena, The Center's veterinarian. "In 1998 we diagnosed the first case of domoic acid toxicity in marine mammals on the west coast. In 2000, over 170 animals were diagnosed with domoic acid poisoning; many of them died. Now, four years later, we are able to quickly identify the problem and begin care, increasing the survival rate by nearly 65 percent," said Haulena.

Irwin is the director of the Australia Zoo in Queensland, Australia. The idea for filming a series about veterinary techniques around the world stems from the work done at the zoo's veterinary hospital.

The Marine Mammal Center celebrates its 30th anniversary in January, 2005. The non-profit hospital is dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of marine mammals that are found ill, injured or orphaned, along 600 miles of northern and central California coastline. Since 1975, The Center has treated over 10,000 California sea lions, elephant seals, sea otters, and other marine life. It uniquely combines its rehabilitation program with scientific discovery and education programs throughout the Bay Area and the world, to advance the understanding of marine mammal health, ocean health and to promote conservation.

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