

INSIDE

Hands off the pup, buddy!

By Peter Hamilton

It's the time of the year that wildlife protection organizations, such as Lifeforce, a Vancouver-based ecology organization, get inundated with calls about seal pups on the beach.

If people remember these simple rules then it will be a lot less worries for all – especially for those baby seals who are often needlessly separated from their moms.

Moms will drop off their babies on shore and go off to feed. They are often mistaken as injured or abandoned.

Unless the pup is obviously injured and/or entangled with nets the pup must be monitored for 24 to 48 hours.

It is illegal to pickup, touch or feed any wildlife. This includes both live and dead seals. The penalties and fines are strictly enforced in the U.S. Under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act penalties include a civil penalty of up to \$10,000 for each offense or criminal prosecution with a fine of up to \$20,000 or imprisonment for up to one year, or both.

People and animals must be kept away from the pup because the mom considers them a threat and will not come back to feed her baby.

If a human touches the pup it will not stop the mom from reuniting with her baby if the pup is left alone.

If anyone is concerned about a seal or any wildlife call Lifeforce and they will investigate, monitor and contact appropriate agencies. Their phone number is 604/649-5258.

The enforcement agencies are:

In U.S. – National Marine Fisheries Service – 800/853-1964

In Canada – Department of Fisheries and Oceans – 800/465-4336

(Any wildlife found in the U.S. cannot be transported to Canada.)

S 3-day-old pup who was recently picked up by a citizen on a Saturday and told by the U.S. enforcement agency to return the pup to where he was removed. Then, the next day, another person picked him up and was also told to put him back.

Since the excess human interventions hampered a quick reunion with the mom and the young pup could get dehydrated, Peter Hamilton of Lifeline was authorized by the U.S. government to pick up the pup and take him to the marina to be transported to a rehabilitation and release facility by U.S. law enforcement officers.