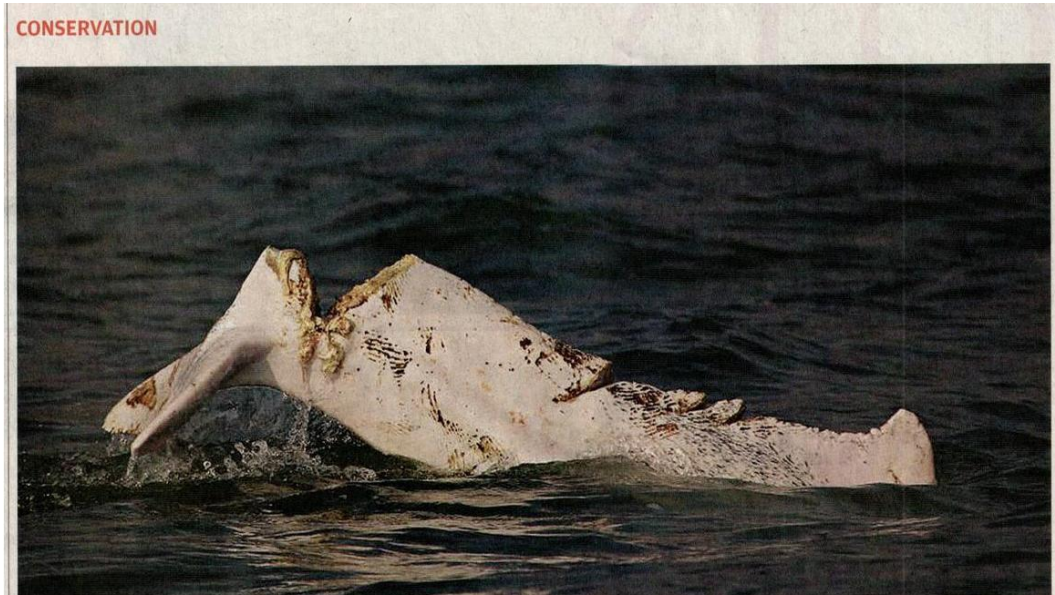


## 'Rescue protocol needed' as injured dolphin gets worse



The extent of the dolphin's injuries make capturing it without harming it further very challenging. Photos: Cetacean Ecology Lab, The Swire Institute of Marine Science, HKU

# 'RESCUE PROTOCOL NEEDED' AS INJURED DOLPHIN GETS WORSE



**Top local scientist slams 'fatal procrastination' and 'gross misjudgment' by the authorities as animal's wound shows signs of infection**

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Hong Kong must establish a set of rules for the rescue of injured marine mammals, a top local scientist said, as he revealed that the condition of a Chinese white dolphin wounded in the city's waters was worsening.

The dolphin was first spotted off the southwestern coast of Lantau Island last month, with horrific slash injuries across its fin and back after what is believed to have been a collision with a tour boat's outboard motor.

Although some conservationists called for the animal to be left alone due to the risks involved in capture, Dr Leszek Karczmarski, an associate professor at the University of Hong Kong, said an immediate rescue was needed.

Rescue attempts have so far failed to capture the dolphin and Karczmarski is calling for a protocol to be developed to provide effective protection measures for injured marine mammals.

"Clearly, there is a need for a proper marine mammal rescue protocol to be developed in Hong Kong, given rigorous professional review, and once approved it should be adopted and obeyed by all concerned parties," he wrote in a letter to the press.

In the two weeks since its discovery, Karczmarski said the dolphin, which he named "Hope", had lost substantial weight and one of its cuts was showing signs

of infection – which he is concerned could enter the dolphin's bloodstream and eventually kill the animal, if left to fester.

He said the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department needed to have a flexible set of rules and a range of approaches to choose from according to the conditions, if such an accident were to happen again.

"A professional judgment must be made," Karczmarski told

not leave the animal unattended and let it suffer for days.

"Capturing the dolphin has been challenging due to the extent of its injuries," he said.

Karczmarski said the lack of action by authorities was due to "fatal procrastination", "emotions" and "gross misjudgment" of the mammal's conditions by an "apparent expert".

That is an apparent reference is Dolphin Conservation Society chairman Dr Samuel Hung Kai-yiu, who had urged authorities to observe carefully and draw up a well-informed plan before attempting to catch the dolphin.

But Hung said it was unfair to place responsibility for the delay in rescue on him just because rescue attempts had failed.

"We said in the beginning that rushing such a task would be difficult and could put more stress on the already-injured animal," Hung said. "It is a complicated procedure. No one in Hong Kong has ever attempted open water capture of a dolphin, let alone an injured one, but they insisted they [could] do it."

Hung agreed there was a need for a proper rescue protocol as it would have helped prevent the hesitation of the last few weeks. "We all must work together to ensure the other 60 dolphins [in the city's waters] do not suffer the same fate," he said.

A department spokesman said there was a protocol for both live and dead marine mammals and the Ocean Park team was its partner in executing it.

"We are open to suggestions of how the response to similar events can be improved," he said. The last attempt to rescue the dolphin was on Monday.

**We would not leave [an injured feral Lantau cow] unattended and let it suffer**

DR LESZEK KARZMARSKI

the Post. "The [department] may not have the expertise or credentials to carry out a rescue, but it can appoint someone ... A similar incident could happen again."

It is understood that the department and the Ocean Park Conservation Fund have made four failed attempts at capturing the injured dolphin.

"This sad case never had anything to do with conservation per se; but it had all to do with helping a suffering animal injured by us humans ... If a truck hit one of the feral cattle on Lantau, we would

<http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1700215/hong-kong-marine-expert-calls-animal-rescue-rules-after-chinese-white>