

Animal handling and nursing

The ISS policy:

Don't assume an animal is OK

If you observe lethargy, slow responses, or new behaviours, if the breathing pattern seems strange, if there is blood in the faeces or from the mouth etc., if the animal is in a pool, move to a kennel and,

→ **GET ADVICE!!!**

Nobody expects you to have all the answers or always know what to do! We operate on a **NO EXCUSE NO BLAME basis**, it's all about learning.

For advice, speak to the managers, or call Brendan, Pauline or the local consulting vet.

An animal in good condition will:

- Have good specs
- Lie on side and/ stretch into the 'banana' position
- Be lively, bright, alert and responsive

→ **see Ailments and treatments section for advice on seals that are not in good condition**

Calculating how much to feed a seal:

- For a seal to pup to grow and thrive it should eat between 15 – 20% of its bodyweight per day
- For a pup to maintain its bodyweight and not lose condition it should eat at least between 10 – 15% (if a seal is difficult to feed, try to at least get 10% of bodyweight into it)

- 20% is the same as divide by 5 or multiply by 0.20, 15% is the same as divide by 6.66 or multiply by 0.15.
- Example for a 15kg pup:

Fish soup:

For 15%: $15/6.66 = 2.25\text{L}$ or $15 * 0.15 = 2.25\text{L}$ or 2250mL

For 20%: $15/5 = 3\text{L}$ or $15 * 0.2 = 3\text{L}$ or 3000mL

So a 15kg seal should be getting between 2250mL and 3000mL fish soup per day

If the seal is on 4 feeds per day:

$2.25/4 = 0.5625$ or 600mL

$3/4 = 0.75$ or 750mL

So a 15kg animal should be getting between 600mL and 750mL fish soup per feed 4x a day

Fish:

For 15%: $15/6.66 = 2.25\text{kg}$ or $15 * 0.15 = 2.25\text{kg}$

For 20%: $15/5 = 3\text{kg}$ or $15 * 0.2 = 3\text{kg}$

So a 15kg seal should be getting between 2.25kg and 3kg fish per day

If the seal is on 4 feeds per day:

$2.25/4 = 0.5625$ or approx 600g

$3/4 = 0.75$ or 750g

So a 15kg seal should be getting between 600g and 750g per feed 4x a day

NOTE: Do not give the seal this full amount when first starting on solids or the seal may get constipated or sick, especially if it hasn't eaten in a long time. Work up to this amount over a couple of days.

Catching a seal

For video on catching a seal see www.irishsealsanctuary.ie/vets

Always make sure the head is contained and covered before catching a seal.

When on a seal, don't be afraid to use force, they are strong animals.

Tubing

For video on tubing see www.irishsealsanctuary.ie/vets

Make sure you have assisted with tubing and are being assisted by an experienced animal handler before attempting to tube
Most importantly, do not fight seal or lose patience. Remain calm at all times and if struggling, get off seal and try again later.

Force feeding

For video on force feeding see www.irishsealsanctuary.ie/vets

Make sure you are being assisted by an experienced animal handler before attempting to force feed.

If having a hard time, do not fight with seal or lose patience. Remain calm and get off seal. Try again later, or revert to tubing.

Giving injections

- Seal are injected intramuscularly approx 2 inches left or right of the spine half-way between the pelvic and rib bones. (see fig. for location)
- When drawing up injection, make sure to flick out any air bubbles
- When giving injection, feel for location drawn in figure, make sure you feel for muscle.
- Inject at 45° angle
- Try to hold animal securely so they don't move while injecting

- Draw out first to make sure you have not hit a vein (that there is no blood in syringe)
- Inject fluid slowly
- When injection done, take out needle, put pressure on injection site.
- Make sure handler giving injection is out of kennel before the handler restraining seal gets up.