

IMATA - International Marine Animal Trainer's Association

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**THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION AND TRUST IN A LONG TREATMENT
OF INTRAMUSCULAR INJECTION IN OLD TUSIOPS TRUNCATUS, WHO WAS
NEVER INJECTED, USING POSITIVE HISTORY SCENARIO AS A SUCCESSFUL
CONDITIONING METHOD**

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W.H.I.T. (Welfare and Husbandry Innovative Training),

Last winter it was necessary to apply intramuscular injection treatment for twenty consecutive days to Flip, 31-year-old Atlantic bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) who has never been injected before. Onmega's training team had the challenge of conditioning injection tolerance while actual medical treatment was administered. The team's goal was not to capture Flip but to do so voluntarily.

Applying methods of active desensitization, we offered a preconditioned positive scenario in which the dolphin was voluntarily beached and then surrounded by trainers for a gastric inspection, as a positive reference to gradually extinguish the aversive response to the application of the injection, then to receive intramuscular injection as a positive stimulus.

This paper will review the challenges involved in undertaking such a plan.