

Date: Sat, 10 Jul 2004 21:17:21 -1000

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Subject: Recommendations- Trip to French Polynesia June 2004

Dear Dr. Zipper, here are my recommendations resulting from a consultancy completed for the Le Meridien and PF Government. I hope they are useful. Please acknowledge receipt so I know this message was safely delivered.

Aloha, George Balazs

Recommendations for the Le Meridien turtle project- July 2004:

MANAGEMENT

-Stop feeding jellyfish due to potential for toxicity. Do not feed any other exotic items.

-Adjust food levels and feeding schedules so that fat turtles receive less food and skinny turtles receive more food.

-Grind or chop food fish so that smaller turtles can easily swallow the pieces.

-Feed pellets first prior to feeding food fish so that consumption of pellets by the turtles is maximized ensuring nutritionally balanced intake that includes vitamins and minerals. Allow some time to elapse so that turtles will eat the pellets before feeding ground or chopped fish. Presoak the pellets to soften before giving them to the turtles.

-Feed vegetation such as lettuce from the kitchen as often as possible. Feed the lettuce before giving the pellets.

-Maintain a simple system, such as "Dremel" marks, to quickly and accurately identify each turtle as an individual. Use this marking system to conduct an inventory on a monthly basis of all turtles at the facility.

-Maintain a log book to record daily feeding and observations.

-Obtain a scoop net to quickly and efficiently catch turtles for examination.

-Institute measures to prevent small turtles (such as the 17 cm size) from crawling over the sand out of captivity when they are moved from the nursery to the lagoon.

-Measure turtles once a month to determine that growth rates are satisfactory. Maintain a log on measurements including notes on general health of individuals.

-Measure and weigh turtles every week that are suspect of ill-health, such as not eating well, lethargic, and not growing as well as the other turtles.

-Make a "quarantine" area such as a pen with shade to hold turtles for closer observation that are not growing well or seem to be in ill-health. Feed and inspect these turtles more often. Include "eye reflex test" as a part of all exams.

-Have veterinarian make regularly scheduled visits to examine all the turtles and confer with turtle care-takers, perhaps once every 3 months.

-Send turtles to Moorea only when they are in bad enough condition to warrant sending them there.

-Freeze immediately any turtle that dies so that necropsy can be conducted for tissue collection on as fresh a turtle carcass as possible.

-Release turtles into the wild only when they have reached an appropriate size for living in benthic habitats (equal to or greater than 40 curved carapace length).

-Ensure that all turtles released into the wild are properly marked with flipper tags for long term identification (double tagged- one on each front flipper).

-Maintain a detailed record log of sizes, tag numbers, dates and locations of all turtles released into the wild.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TO PROMOTE SEA TURTLE SURVIVAL

-Use captive turtles often whenever and however possible to maximum advantage in educational outreach activities, including for the resort guests, resort personnel and their families, school child of Bora Bora and other islands of FP.

-Actively support and sponsor the protection and conservation of nesting sites where the hatchlings are obtained.