

Penzance vets perform major surgery on seal pup's broken flipper



Purple had suffered several bite wounds and a broken flipper

Credit: VetPartners

A seal pup is recovering well after undergoing surgery for a broken flipper in Penzance.

Purple is just a few weeks old and was found in distress at Fisherman's Cove in Godrevy. He'd been badly bitten and a bone in his rear flipper was broken.

He was taken to Rosevean Veterinary Practice, which is now working with the Cornish Seal Sanctuary, and was the first seal emergency they'd seen.

In a delicate two-hour operation, Purple was placed under anaesthetic, which carries a higher risk of complications than with other animals.

Vet and clinical director Matthew Berriman said: "The rear flipper of a seal contains five bony digits, which are very much like human fingers."

"There were obvious bite marks on Purple's flipper and it looks like another seal had clamped down quite hard with their teeth, fracturing one of the bones. It was quite a bad break and the wound had become infected."

"The best course of action to save Purple's flipper and enable him to swim normally again was to partially amputate the broken bone and remove any infected tissue. We were really pleased with how the surgery went."



*Sam Wheeler (above) was part of the team who operated on Purple in Penzance
Credit: VetPartners*

Purple had a team of vets and nurses monitoring him while he was under anaesthetic to ensure he survived the surgery.

Matthew added: "Purple's recovery is progressing well and the surgical wound, which is about 6in long, is healing nicely."

"We have been receiving updates from the Sanctuary and Sam has been visiting the centre to carry out post-operative checks."



He's a real water baby and loves playing with the water from the hosepipe
Credit: VetPartners

Purple's operation was funded by the Sanctuary's supporters after an appeal was published on their social media pages.

The Sanctuary's fundraising manager Leanne Atwood said: "As a charity we rely on generous donations from our supporters to help seal pups like Purple when they need vital operations."

"We were absolutely blown away by the support for our fundraiser and cannot thank everyone enough for their amazing generosity, this will help us to give Purple a chance at a happy and healthy new life in the wild."

Purple is now recovering from surgery at the Sanctuary in Gweek, where he is being kept as dry as possible while his wound heals but is allowed daily playtime with a hose.

Cornish Seal Sanctuary curator Tamara Cooper said: "The difference in Purple since his surgery is incredible and he must feel much more comfortable."

"He's a real water baby and loves playing with the water from the hosepipe and is behaving like a seal pup should do, which is lovely to see."

"We couldn't be happier with the care Rosevean Veterinary Practice has given to Purple and to our other seal pups and are delighted that we'll be benefiting from their expertise in the future."

"We are also grateful to the British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDLMR), who went to Purple's aid and brought him to us."

Tamara believes Purple may have been bitten after confusing another seal with his mum.

She said: "Other than the bites, Purple was in good health and this is what made him a good candidate for surgery."

"His mum had obviously done a good job of feeding him and he had plenty of fat stored to see him through the weaning process, which happens at around two and a half weeks of age."

"Hopefully Purple's rehabilitation will continue to progress well and we'll be able to be return him to the sea in a few weeks' time."

Rosevean Veterinary Practice

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