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"Dolphins are back 4 animals moved into Prospect Reef facility.

Dolphins return to Prospect Reef Mexico-based company sets up shop with four animals"

By Susanna Henighan

Dolphins have returned to Prospect Reef Resort. Dolphin Discovery, one of the worlds largest marine mammal companies, has opened shop at Prospect Reef in Road Town.

The Mexico-based company, which has 58 dolphins located among its four locations, move four male dolphins - Atlas, Icaro, Poseidon and Calypso – to Tortola last week. The dolphins arrived at the Terrence B Lettsome International Airport at 1am Thursday aboard a chartered airplane.

It had been a long day: the animals and the crew of humans travelling with them left Cancun, Mexico, in the morning. Two stops for refuelling and a delay due to bad weather explained the extra-long trip.

While humans may have found such a trip exhausting, the dolphins were not stressed by the travel, according to a Dolphin Discovery official. "The travel was very smooth. Its actually a relaxing experience for them," said Renat(sic) Lenzi, head of research, animal care and veterinary care for Dolphin Discovery.

Later Thursday, the government veterinarian inspected the animals. "He is very surprised to see how well they are doing" Lenzi said. On Saturday afternoon, the dolphins were swimming around the facility, after participating in one of their first swim programmes with a group of tourists.

Dolphin Discovery is the second company to open a programme at Prospect Reef. The first, Dolphin Plus, began operations in Fall 2001, but left the facility last year and moved the animals to Dominica. One dolphin died days after the move.

Concerns have been raised about the water quality at the Prospect Reef facility. Lenzi said that Dolphin Discovery began testing the water here last November and has never found it to be unsafe. "We have found all the values to be within US Dept of Agriculture standards for marine mammals" he said.

In addition to concerns about the water quality, it was clear to passers-by that the Dolphins Plus facility was not nearly as popular among tourists as had been hoped; there appeared to be few customers at the facility each day.

So is Dolphin Discovery confident it will be able to lure more business?

"We would not have come out here if we didn't think this was somewhere that would be safe for the animals and would make business sense," Lenzi said, noting that although it is just nine years old, Dolphin Discovery is a large, experienced business. Lenzi pledged that company practices exceed the animal safety standards required by the US, Europe and Mexico."