

Simon Childerhouse.

During my time on Enderby I witnessed many instances of pups being bashed and shaken by juveniles and adults.

One of the most common events was of juvenile males roughly interacting with pups. For the most part these males were too young and small to hold territories on the beach and were on the periphery of the colony. In essence, these juvenile males “practised” breeding behaviour on pups by trying to keep the pups in their “territories”. I witnessed juvenile males biting pups, picking them up and carrying them, picking them up and shaking them, lying on them and simulating/attempting to mate with them. Generally this behaviour is reasonably gentle but frequently, it is very vigorous and the pup may be flung several metres. General behaviour would be described as male biting a pup on the body or sometimes head, keeping hold and then straightening up and flinging the pup almost over their shoulder so they land 1-2 m away. I have never seen a young male bite a pup hard but I have seen skulls from dead pups with distinctive tooth marks from what appears to be young males. Young males also shake pups by biting them, holding on, and shaking them as they do with a octopus or other prey when in the water. They don’t shake them as strongly as when they in the water but can give them 2-3 side to side swings.

Large mature males tend to ignore pups but this does not mean that they do not interact with them. The large males holding territories charge around their territory defending their boundaries and regularly run over and/or stop on top of pups. While most of the beach is soft sand there are places where it is quite hard and having a 400kg male run over or lie on a pup can be injurious.

Females generally restrict their interactions with non-filial pups to warning them of with open mouths or small nips. Occasionally a female will give a pup a decent bite or bite it and fling it away a metre or so.

Louise Chilvers

Pup shaking usually occurs from late January into February because it is conducted by sub-adult males (SAMs). SAMs numbers increase dramatically at this time of year because adult males are leaving the breeding harem and Auckland Island area. It is also a time of year when pups are getting a little older and more adventurous moving around the harem area more. SAMs often herd pups by pushing them around with their noses and this behaviour can quickly turn into the pups being picked up by their neck or back and more forcefully be moved or thrown. Sub-adult males can continue this behaviour for up to 20 to 30 minutes until the pup escapes from the SAMs notice, the SAM because bored or is distracted by being chased away by a mother, another sub adult or the puppy dies or is injured and the SAM loses interest. The area the pup is bitten varies from the neck to the base of the back near the tail. Often the pup is shaken vigorously or thrown with the full weight of the pup in the SAMs mouth. The SAMs can hold or shake a pup for several seconds - however most

pups of this age weigh 10kg + and would be wriggling madly to try and escape so it would be difficult to keep a hold of a pup unless the bite pressure is quite strong.

Amelie Auge

I could say that trying to remember females will grab the pup by any area that's closest to them but won't move to get them and just throw them away but don't shake them. The few young males I have seen that started shaking pups, I think were grabbing pup by the back or neck mainly and throwing them after a few shakes.

Martin Cawthorn

Basically, attacks on pups come from two sources, females with pups at foot, SAMs (2-4 yrs old) and socially immature adults which we called SIAMs (sexually mature males from 5-7 or 8 yrs old).

In the first instance, the pups would get whacked on the head or tossed about while trying to sneak a feed. Some knocks on the head were severe enough to result in either depressed fractures or holes in the cranium - when death was inevitable. Recidivists could always be recognised by the scabby appearance around their necks and heads but these adepts had learned that getting chucked about was preferable to a whack on the head with a caniform incisor or even a canine. They would go through an elaborate, often exaggerated, neck presentation when caught out, rather like the 'who me? not even interested thank you' defence with no eye contact etc., and try to slink out of the way before getting whacked. Some did better and just pretended to be asleep.

SAMs were usually involved in practicing harem keeping and would sequester pup pods. When pups were answering calls from their mothers and tried to leave they were often roughly pushed back into the heap by the SAMs. However this behaviour rarely led to death. SIAMs, on the other hand, would not only keep a pup harem but would try seriously to mate with some of them. One individual we watched kept his pups far enough from the main body of the rookery to make it all but impossible for the unfortunate pups to get back to their mothers even if they were determined to. Occasionally these SIAMs got very rough and pups were often injured either by attempted matings, suffocated as the males held the pups beneath them, or by biting the pups, swinging them about and smashing them on the ground. I would hasten to add however that pederasty at this level was a rare event thank goodness. Some animals were serial offenders and would even keep a dead pup with them for a couple of days indulging in what has been cited as "Davian Behaviour". The term has a poetic origin I can explain if you wish.