



*'Pepper' was one of the many grey seals nursed back to health by the Scottish Sealife Sanctuary and was released back into the wild two years ago.*

'My fear was someone had gone too close to the seal before we arrived and the mother had gone.

'I contacted the Scottish Sealife Sanctuary and they said they usually leave pups to see if the mother will return.

'However with this being such a public place they will take this pup away.'

The seal pup spent over an hour on the shore before she was rescued and taken to the sealife sanctuary where it was named after the old movie star Merle Oberon.

Jamie Dyer, display supervisor at the Sealife Centre, was pleased to report that although the pup had not been injured she was severely underweight, but is now making a good recovery.

He said: 'The pup, which is about two and a half weeks old, is very underweight. When she was brought in she weighed 11 kilograms - at this stage it should weigh 35 kilograms in the wild.

'Now she is doing okay - she is feeding and her temperature is back up, although she is pretty weak.'

Now Merle will work her way through the nursery and she will be force fed fish before moving to the small pool. Once she reaches a weight of 40 kilograms she will be put into the outside pool.

'Obviously the pup was separated from her mother,' said Mr Dyer.

'The pup might have been brought so far into the bay after storms separated them. It is unusual to find a pup in this area - most pups stay in colonies, - and there are no real colonies around here.

'This year we have had nine grey seals, with two or three local pups coming from Wick, Thurso and Campbeltown.

'If a pup is found we recommend that it is watched from a distance - if someone goes too near their scent can be put onto the pup, and the mother will not recognise the pup and swim away.

'Normally it is best to get advice before approaching a pup on the shore.'