School of Veterinary Science

Pathology Report

Submitter Ref.: H340	Date Sent: 05/12/2024	Accession No.: **64214**

To: [redacted]
Westport

Email:

Report Sent: 18/12/2024
Copy To:

Species: Cetacean		Breed: Hector's Dolphin	
Age: Neonate		Sex: Female	
Owner:			Type: Post Mortem
ID: H340			Prev. Accn.:
Submitted:	At Risk:	Affected:	Dead:

Gross Findings

This young calf was submitted frozen for necropsy. After thawing the state of preservation was assessed as moderate (code 2-3), and the body condition assessed as average for a neonate. Blubber depth measurements were 15mm dorsal, 14mm lateral and 13mm ventral. The standard length was 740mm. The umbilicus had been completely scavenged, leaving a full thickness defect that extended into the abdominal cavity. There was moderate scavenging of the skin and superficial blubber of the ventrum. Fetal folds were prominent, the dorsal fin was folded and there were fetal whiskers present. The teeth had not erupted. The internal organs were recognisable but moderately autolysed. The lungs were dark red but partially aerated and floated in formalin. There was abundant meconium in the colon. The stomach contained only a small amount of turbid pink mucoid material with no evidence of ingested milk.

Diagnosis

Maternal separation (unknown underlying cause)

Comments

This very young calf had breathed (i.e. it was born alive) but had not lived for long, as shown by the presence of abundant meconium in the colon. Meconium is the fetal equivalent of faeces, and is formed while the fetus is in the uterus. This black/green sticky material is then expelled in the first few days of life once the newborn suckles and starts to produce normal feces. Death in this case is therefore attributed to 'maternal separation', meaning that the calf died after failing to nurse from its mother.

There are several reasons for a failure to nurse: physical separation (e.g. during a storm event), death of the mother, or illness of the calf. The only one of these that can be investigated at post mortem is illness of the calf, and although the tissues from this calf were processed for histological investigation, they were too autolysed (decomposed) to be helpful.

Date: 18/12/2024	Pathologists:
Students:	