

Pathology Report

Submitter Ref.: H345	Date Sent: 22/05/2025	Accession No.: 64860
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To: Department of Conservation
Timaru

Report Sent: 30/05/2025

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Species: Cetacean		Breed: Hector's Dolphin	
Age: Adult		Sex: Female	
Owner:		Type: Post Mortem	
ID: H345		Prev. Accn.:	
Submitted:	At Risk:	Affected:	Dead:

Gross Findings

This dolphin was received frozen and was thawed for necropsy. The body was in a good state of preservation (code 2) and good body condition. The standard length was 1.4m and the blubber depths were 14mm dorsally, 15mm laterally and 15mm ventrally. There were several shallow, slightly curved incisions over both sides of the body. Some of these had a slightly wavy profile. On the left shoulder there was a long curved set of short (4-10mm) cuts spaced about 1cm apart. There were several sets of superficial rake marks on the flanks, as well as 3 sets of 2-3 parallel shallow linear incisions on the throat, with the parallel cuts being approximately 1mm apart. There were several short nicks on the lips, along with 2 missing teeth. There were no nicks present on the fins or flippers, and no encircling impressions.

On flensing there was bilateral asymmetrical bruising of the soft tissue of the dorsal aspect of the skull, extending along the margin of the right maxilla. Similar apparent bruising was present along the margin of the left mandible and in the intermandibular space. There were no associated skull fractures, and no intracranial haemorrhages.

There was partly digested prey in the oral cavity and oesophagus. The stomach was distended with partly digested prey of porridge-like consistency with numerous small fine fish bones admixed. The caudal large intestine contained grey, pasty fecal material with gritty foci.

The caudal lobes of both lungs had alternating bands of pink and red stripes, with multifocal mottled patches of dark red parenchyma more cranially. The cranial lobes were well inflated and there was no foam or froth in the larger airways.

The intestinal lacteals had faint discontinuous areas of chyle. There were no peri-renal gas bubbles.

Both ovaries were small and smooth, and the uterus did not have linear striations.

Diagnosis

Known bycatch

Comments

The lesions found in this dolphin are consistent with drowning in a fishing net, particularly the recent prey in the stomach and the lacerations on the body. Although it can be difficult to interpret bruising in frozen/thawed bodies, the dark red markings on the soft tissues of the head of this dolphin appear to be more severe than what we usually see in frozen dolphins, and in my opinion represent true bruising caused by interaction with fishing gear.

Date: 19/06/2025	Pathologists: [REDACTED]
Students:	