

# Pathology Report

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To: Department of Conservation  
Westport

Report Sent: 05/03/2021

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Species: Cetacean	Breed: Hector's Dolphin		
Age: Neonate	Sex: Female		
Owner:			Type: Post Mortem
ID: H290			Prev. Accn.:
Submitted:	At Risk:	Affected:	Dead:

## Gross Findings

This calf had been frozen before shipping, but had thawed by the time it arrived in Palmerston North. The body was in a good state of post mortem preservation. The neck was prominent, and lateral blubber depth was 13mm. There were no marks indicative of human interaction (other than 2 x areas where skin had been resected, presumably by the DOC team). There were multiple rake marks, and the left side of the snout, chin and throat had gouges and crescent shaped nicks consistent with scavenging. The most rostral marks were lightly blood-stained. The umbilicus was fresh, but torn quite close to the skin, leaving only 1-2mm of umbilical stump. There were prominent fetal folds, and the dorsal fin was folded. Lateral tongue papillae were also prominent, and there were no erupted teeth.

The lungs were hyperinflated and floated in formalin. One lobe was mottled dark red/pink (likely congestion contrasting with well aerated lobules).

The stomach contained a small amount of tan/white thick fluid which contained multiple tiny white flecks consistent with milk clots. Similar fluid was present in the proximal small intestine. The distal large intestine and rectum contained abundant meconium.

The brain was moderately autolysed, with no apparent gross lesions.

## Histopathology

Mild squame aspiration

## Diagnosis

Probable maternal separation

## Comments

There was no gross or histological evidence of human involvement in this calf's death or of infectious disease. The calf's lungs were inflated, which indicates that it survived for at least some time after birth, although blood clots had not yet fully formed in the umbilical vessels, meaning that it likely only survived for a matter of hours or days. There was a small amount of what appeared to be milk in the stomach, and a large amount of meconium in the large intestine, which again is consistent with a short period of survival after birth.

'Maternal separation' is the diagnosed cause of death, but it should be noted that there are a number of possible reasons why a calf could be separated from its mother, including severe weather events, weakness/illness of the calf, or illness/death of the mother. It isn't possible to narrow this down further in this particular case.

Date: 10/12/2020	Pathologists:
Students:	