

Pathology Report

Submitter Ref.: H344	Date Sent:	Accession No.: 64526
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To: [REDACTED]
Department of Conservation
Kaikoura

Report Sent: 14/03/2025

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Email:

Species: Cetacean		Breed: Hector's Dolphin	
Age: Adult		Sex: Female	
Owner:		Type: Post Mortem	
ID: H344		Prev. Accn.:	
Submitted:	At Risk:	Affected:	Dead:

History

Not supplied

Gross Findings

The dolphin was shipped frozen. The body condition was assessed as moderate. On thawing it was severely decomposed (code 4), with purple-black discolouration of the throat, bloating of the tongue, extensive sloughing of the skin and liquefaction of blubber and organs. Both eyes were missing. The terminal part of the large intestine was everted through the anus and was bloated and putrefied. The decomposition changes made it difficult to fully assess for skin markings and injuries, but combined with evaluation of the on-site photos taken by DOC some comments can be made. There were numerous superficial, straight to slightly curved lacerations over most body surfaces. In addition there were short, broad (3-4mm wide) gouge lesions (interpreted as scavenging) in several areas, along with extensive skin 'cracks' typical of dessication after death. It was not possible to fully assess the main body organs due to decomposition, but the lungs were collapsed and dark red, and the stomach was full (large amounts of fine fish bones along with semi-digested flesh). The uterus was mature, with linear striations consistent with previous pregnancy. The right ovary had numerous follicles and the left was smooth. Minimal tissues were collected for histology due to the autolysis, and no tissues were collected for culture or molecular analysis for the same reason.

Diagnosis

Possible bycatch

Comments

The nature of the skin lacerations on this dolphin, combined with her having a stomach full of recently digested prey suggest that she may have died as a result of entanglement. Since these changes are not specific to bycatch (i.e. they can be seen in other causes of death) we would usually also look for any evidence of another cause of death by fully evaluating all the main body organs grossly and under the microscope. Unfortunately that wasn't possible in this individual, since most body organs were too decomposed for evaluation. We have collected a minimal tissue set for histology and will send an updated report if these yield any further useful information.

Date: 14/03/2025	Pathologists: [REDACTED]
Students:	