

# School of Veterinary Science

## Pathology Report

Submitter Ref.: H349	Date Sent: 16/12/2025	Accession No.: 65604
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To: [REDACTED]  
Department of Conservation  
Christchurch

Report Sent: 11/02/2026

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

### History

Found beachcast at South Brighton Beach. Chilled and shipped by air the next day.

### Gross Findings

This very young male calf presented chilled, in a fresh state of preservation and in good body condition. There were prominent fetal folds, fetal whiskers were present, no teeth were erupted and a short, very fresh umbilical stump was present. The calf weighed 5.2kg and measured 665mm in length. The blubber depths were 14mm dorsal, 13mm lateral and 16mm ventral.

The lungs were well inflated, and the stomach contained a scant amount of milk. There was meconium in the distal large intestine. The liver was pale (likely mobilisation of glycogen stores).

### Histopathology

No significant abnormalities

### Provisional Diagnosis

Maternal separation

### Comments

This was a very young calf, as evidenced by the fresh umbilical stump and the presence of meconium in the intestine. The inflated lungs tell us that he was born alive (i.e. not stillborn) and he had lived long enough to suckle at least once (milk was present in his stomach). The provisional diagnosis in this case is 'maternal separation'; tissues will be processed for histology to evaluate whether there was any identifiable process underlying this calf's death.

Addendum - final diagnosis.

The tissues from this dolphin were extremely well-preserved, indicating that there was a short period between its death and post mortem examination. There were no significant histological findings to suggest that this calf had an underlying disease.

Date: 19/12/2025	Pathologists:
Students:	