

Pathology Report

Submitter Ref.: H352	Date Sent: 04/09/2026	Accession No.: 66541
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To: [REDACTED]
Department of Conservation
Invercargill

Report Sent: 04/09/2026

Copy To:

Email: [REDACTED]

Species: Cetacean		Breed: Hector's Dolphin	
Age: Adult		Sex: Female - pregnant	
Owner:		Type: Post Mortem	
ID: H352		Prev. Accn.:	
Submitted:	At Risk:	Affected:	Dead:

History

Beachcast dolphin called in to DOCHOT. Found at Oreti Beach on 20 August 2026. Shipped chilled via Air New Zealand

Gross Findings

This adult female dolphin was received chilled on 21 August, and was in excellent post mortem condition (code 2) and good body condition. Blubber depths were 21mm dorsally; 20mm laterally; and 20mm ventrally. The standard length was 1.46m. Two faint linear impressions were visible on the throat, which appeared to correspond to folds in the plastic packaging. There was minimal skin slippage, a few rake marks and no scavenging. A square, full thickness section of blubber approximately 6cm x 6cm had been excised from the left flank. There was a healed notch mark on the trailing edge of the dorsal fin, and several similar, smaller notches on the trailing edge of the flukes. A small (approx. 15mm) triangular partial thickness skin and subcutaneous tissue defect with sharp edges and no evidence of vital reaction was present on the ventral surface of the left fluke (inflicted post mortem). About 8-10 teeth were missing from the right maxilla; this appeared to be a pre-existing (non-recent) injury. The remaining teeth were partially worn. The conjunctiva of the right eye was markedly congested, with red fluid trailing from the affected tissue.

Flensing revealed pronounced vascular congestion and marked submandibular oedema. There were large amounts of fluid in both the thoracic (translucent red) and abdominal (turbid red) cavities. The lungs were well inflated and mottled red/pink on serosal and cut surfaces. Scattered 1-2mm calcified foci (likely lungworm granulomas) were scattered throughout the pulmonary parenchyma. The peri-aortic and intra-thoracic lymph nodes were enlarged. The uterus was enlarged, with a 420mm, 1.4kg male fetus in the right horn. Thick pale creamy fluid was present on the surface of the fetal membranes. The amniotic fluid was clear yellow. The mammary gland was poorly developed. The left ovary had numerous follicles, while the right was expanded by a large corpus luteum. There were no perirenal gas bubbles, no mesenteric gas bubbles, and no chyle in the intestinal lymphatics. The stomach contained a few cestodes and several fine fish bones. The spleen was enlarged approximately 3x normal and meaty in texture.

Histopathology

Histology summary: The following tissues had multiple areas of haemorrhage and necrosis, with myriad intralesional 2-4um basophilic structures consistent with protozoal tachyzoites: peri-aortic lymph node, lung, liver, spleen, thoracic lymph node. The heart had several foci of myocytolysis and inflammatory infiltrate admixed with protozoal structures. The brain had several foci of gliosis, including one with numerous clusters of protozoal zoites.

Microbiology

PCR confirmed the presence of *T. gondii* DNA

Diagnosis

Disseminated toxoplasmosis

Comments

This pregnant female died of multiple organ failure due to acute severe toxoplasmosis.

Date: 04/09/2026	Pathologists: [REDACTED]
Students:	