NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS

HANDBOOK FOR RECOGNIZING, EVALUATING, AND DOCUMENTING HUMAN INTERACTION IN STRANDED CETACEANS AND PINNIPEDS

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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Southwest Fisheries Science Center

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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The authors are always interested in improving our understanding of human interaction and the effects of human activities on stranded marine mammals. If you have questions, or concerns about the content of this publication, please contact Moore or Barco:

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Cover Images
*Left: Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) stranded in Virginia Beach, VA. Three lesions consistent with propeller strike from a large vessel are obvious on the left side of the animal.*

*Center: A juvenile harp seal (*Pagophilus groenlandica*) with a shotgun wound on Cape Cod, MA.*

*Right: Live bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) wrapped in pot gear near Norfolk, VA. The animal was successfully disentangled and released on site.*

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Acknowledgments

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Preface

This project evolved from joint effort and John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program awards to the Cape Cod Stranding Network, Inc. (CCSN) and the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program (VAQS) where the authors proposed to develop a human interaction training program for the Northeast Region Stranding Network in the United States. At the time of the awards, there was no finalized national human interaction data sheet and the project transformed to include development of a data sheet, data sheet instructions, and a training program. Upon completion of the regional work, the authors proposed to the national stranding coordinator, Dr. Janet Whaley, to provide the training to all stranding networks in the United States.

The information detailed in this handbook is designed to accompany the training program and to serve as a desk reference for stranding responders.

Note on contents

This manual will not address oil/chemical spills or acoustic interactions. Oil and chemical spills are handled under existing established protocols with standard operating procedures. Animals affected by a spill will be managed under spill response protocols implemented through the Incident Command System and overseen by the United States Coast Guard, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Injuries caused by acoustic trauma are not fully understood at this time. Standard protocols are currently being developed and tested. If you suspect acoustic trauma based on circumstances surrounding the stranding, contact your regional stranding coordinator and describe the animal and circumstances. She or he will give you further instructions.

1.0 Background

Goals and objectives of this protocol

The goal of this protocol and the accompanying training material is to provide stranding network personnel with the tools needed to evaluate marine mammals for signs of human interaction (HI) and to collect HI data consistently in all regions of the United States. This goal will be achieved by accomplishing the following objectives:

- Define the terms associated with human interaction evaluations
- Explain the importance of being conservative with observations and reporting
- Provide an understanding of how HI data may/should be used
- Introduce a standardized examination protocol and accompanying data sheet
- Provide guidelines for recognizing and documenting evidence of human interaction found on stranded marine mammals

The protocol presented within this document will yield two important pieces of information. The first is an **objective evaluation** of an animal or carcass that determines whether any signs of human interaction are present on the animal (regardless of whether they may have contributed to the stranding or death of the animal, occurred before or after death, are healed or recent). [Note: for the purposes of discussion, the terms “signs of human interaction” and “findings of human interaction” will be used interchangeably throughout this document and both refer to the current human interaction field on the NOAA Level A data sheet.] The second is a **subjective finding** in which examiners use all available information and their experience to evaluate the likelihood that any observed evidence of HI contributed to the stranding event.

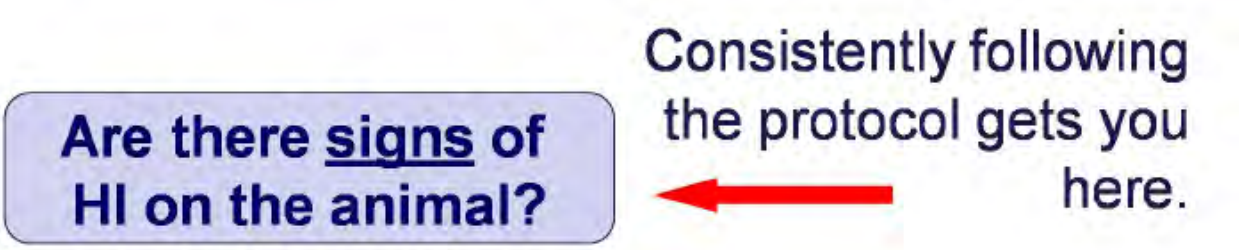
Why evaluate stranded marine mammals for signs of human interaction?

When human interaction data are gathered objectively and consistently, they can provide a solid scientific foundation for conservation and management measures. Documenting the types of interactions that take place and identifying the spatial and temporal patterns associated with the interactions can highlight resource use conflicts. With a better understanding of interactions, appropriate measures can be taken to resolve conflicts. Often, stranding data are the best source of information regarding the occurrence of different types of human interaction.

Furthermore, in the United States, the collection of human interaction data is mandated under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service requires that HI data be submitted with other basic information (such as species, stranding date and location, length, *etc*.) on each stranded animal.

Putting the data to use

Human interaction data are frequently and easily misinterpreted. In the United States, Level A data, including human interaction findings, are collected from each stranded marine mammal. The Level A data sheet asks for: “Findings of human interaction” with multiple choice answers of YES, NO, or CBD (**C**ould not **B**e **D**etermined), followed by related questions to gather more detailed information. However, different organizations and individuals often interpret this primary question differently. The federal instructions for the data sheet state that the data sheet field is designed to determine **only** whether or not there are signs of interaction present on the animal. ***This does not represent the cause of stranding or the cause of death of the stranded animal.***



By standardizing the way we examine animals, collect data, and document interactions, we ensure that we are not only answering the same question, but using the same basis to draw our conclusions. This protocol defines the terms we use to describe and categorize interactions. All organizations implementing this protocol and utilizing the data sheet will collect comparable data, affording the opportunity to analyze data on a broader scale, across the distribution of the species within US waters.

The final subjective conclusion on the data sheet requires the examiner to combine the initial objective finding from the data sheet with the event history/circumstances, sample analyses, and their own experience. This section allows the examiner the opportunity to evaluate the likelihood that an observed interaction contributed to the stranding of the animal.

However, the protocol is NOT designed to determine whether an observed interaction caused the death of an animal. Making this conclusion requires a complete necropsy which includes sampling for evaluation by a veterinary pathologist, sampling for ancillary diagnostics to rule out

infectious disease, and a full history of the circumstances of the stranding event.
When collected carefully and consistently, these data can be used to describe the types of interaction taking place (*e.g.* monofilament vs. multifilament net entanglement, small or large vessel interaction, ingestion of plastic debris, harassment, *etc.*).

Limitations of Human Interaction data

These data can provide a sound scientific basis for policy and management decisions, but one should not use human interaction data to estimate mortality or changes in mortality rate due to human interaction (*e.g.* it is illogical and inaccurate to utilize HI data to estimate mortality in a population. Many animals die of natural causes as well as human interaction. Furthermore, it is certain that many marine mammals perish at sea and their bodies are not discovered for examination. Thus, neither HI data, nor stranding data are representative of the total mortality rate).

Furthermore, there are categories of human interaction that are difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate at this time such as strandings that result from persistent harassment, those that may elicit detrimental behaviors such as sub-lethal exposure to sound, as well as long-term effects of man-made products that may result in lowered immunity, disease or reduced reproductive rate. Human activities have most likely resulted in exposure to novel pathogens such as *Toxoplasma gondii* for marine mammals. Fishing activities have changed abundance and distribution of many natural marine mammal prey species. There are new activities such as renewable energy and aquaculture operations that are just beginning to be exploited in the US, for which we do not yet know the potential impacts on marine mammals.

Currently, we cannot point to a mark or a diagnostic test that can tell us whether a stranded whale has been exposed to active sonar or to sound generated by a wind farm. We cannot guarantee that a seal pup was never exposed to humans or their activities. Finally, we must acknowledge that we do not understand the cumulative effects of multiple human interaction stressors on marine mammals.

We must acknowledge that human activities have affected the lives of every marine mammal, but for our purposes, we are trying to document those human activities that are consistently observable and can be documented by stranding responders.

2.0 The Basics

Definitions

There are several key terms used in this protocol. It is important that all examiners define these terms the same way in order to ensure that our data are comparable.

YES: you have examined the anatomical area/animal and you found clear signs of human interaction.

NO: you have examined the anatomical area/animal and you did NOT find signs of human interaction.

CBD (Could not Be Determined): you are unsure whether there are any signs of human interaction (this may be due to any of several causes including, but not limited to: inexperience of examiner, decomposition, missing body parts, logistical constraints, *etc.*).

NE (Not Examined): you did not examine the area.

NA (Not Applicable): this question is not applicable.

The importance of being conservative

In addition to standardizing our protocols and maintaining objectivity when examining animals, it is essential to be conservative in our evaluations. Since these data may be used to generate policies and management strategies, they must stand up to scientific, and possibly legal, scrutiny. By making very conservative evaluations, we ensure that our data are robust and strong.

Again, for the sake of consistency, we must establish what it means to be conservative. **The most conservative diagnosis is always CBD (Could not Be Determined)**. This is a fundamental premise of this protocol.

It is best understood by thinking of it this way: every animal or carcass is a CBD until proven otherwise. If evidence of human interaction was found, then the objective finding is YES, there were findings of HI. If the animal was thoroughly examined and no evidence of HI was found, then the answer was NO. However, if you were unsure of a mark on the animal for any reason, or if any factors compromised your ability to evaluate the carcass properly or thoroughly, then the finding must remain CBD.

The factors that can affect your ability to evaluate a stranded animal for signs of HI include, but are not limited to:

- Decomposition
- Scavenger damage
- Predation
- Inexperience in conducting these exams
- Logistics (large animals that one cannot manipulate to examine both sides, tidal constraints, weather)

(See Chapter 5.0 Confounding Variables)

It is important to begin with a finding of CBD, then look for evidence to prove otherwise (YES or NO). The reality is that it is much easier to say YES than it is to say NO. Therefore, we must begin with the conservative diagnosis of CBD and search for evidence to indicate a diagnosis of YES (there are findings of HI) or NO (there are no findings of HI). In the majority of cases, the finding will remain CBD. Take the following scenarios as an example:

Scenario 1: A decomposed seal carcass washes ashore. Some fur is missing from the right front flipper and both rear flippers are badly degraded with some skin and muscle missing. There is a circumferential constriction wound around its neck deep into the muscle layer. The edges of the wound appear clean and smooth. Although the source of the wound is not readily apparent (*e.g.* there is no gear on the animal), the wound is consistent with a ligature mark. One can definitively score this as a YES for signs of HI.

Scenario 2: A decomposed seal carcass washes ashore. Some fur is missing from the right front flipper and both rear flippers are badly degraded (This is the same animal as in Scenario 1, without the ligature mark.). One cannot definitively score this animal as a NO because several of the areas could not be evaluated due to the physical degradation. Thus, the only reasonable finding is CBD.

So, it is easier to have a YES finding in this case, but impossible to have a NO finding. It only takes one piece of evidence of HI to have a finding of YES for even a decomposed carcass, but it takes a full, uninhibited examination of all parts of the animal to generate a conclusion that there was no finding of HI. When you cannot definitively say YES or NO, you must conclude that the presence or absence of HI could not be determined (CBD). Thus, CBD is always the most conservative answer.

Strategy for evaluation

Since CBD is a conservative diagnosis, assume the answer is CBD and try to prove otherwise. If you have conducted a thorough examination and find no signs of HI, the diagnosis is **NO.** If you have conducted a thorough examination and find clear signs of HI, the diagnosis is **YES.** If all examiners begin with this premise, it will consistently ensure that the evaluations are conservative.

3.0 Guidelines for Documenting Human Interaction

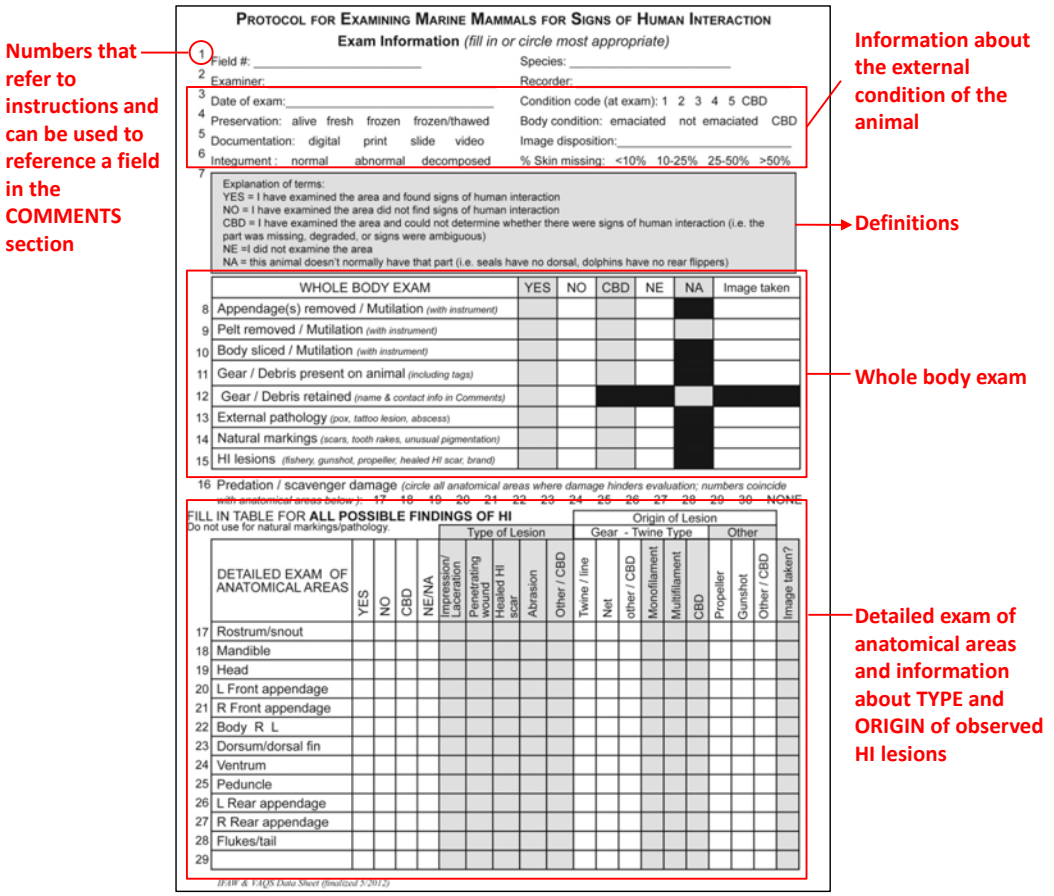
Introduction to the protocol

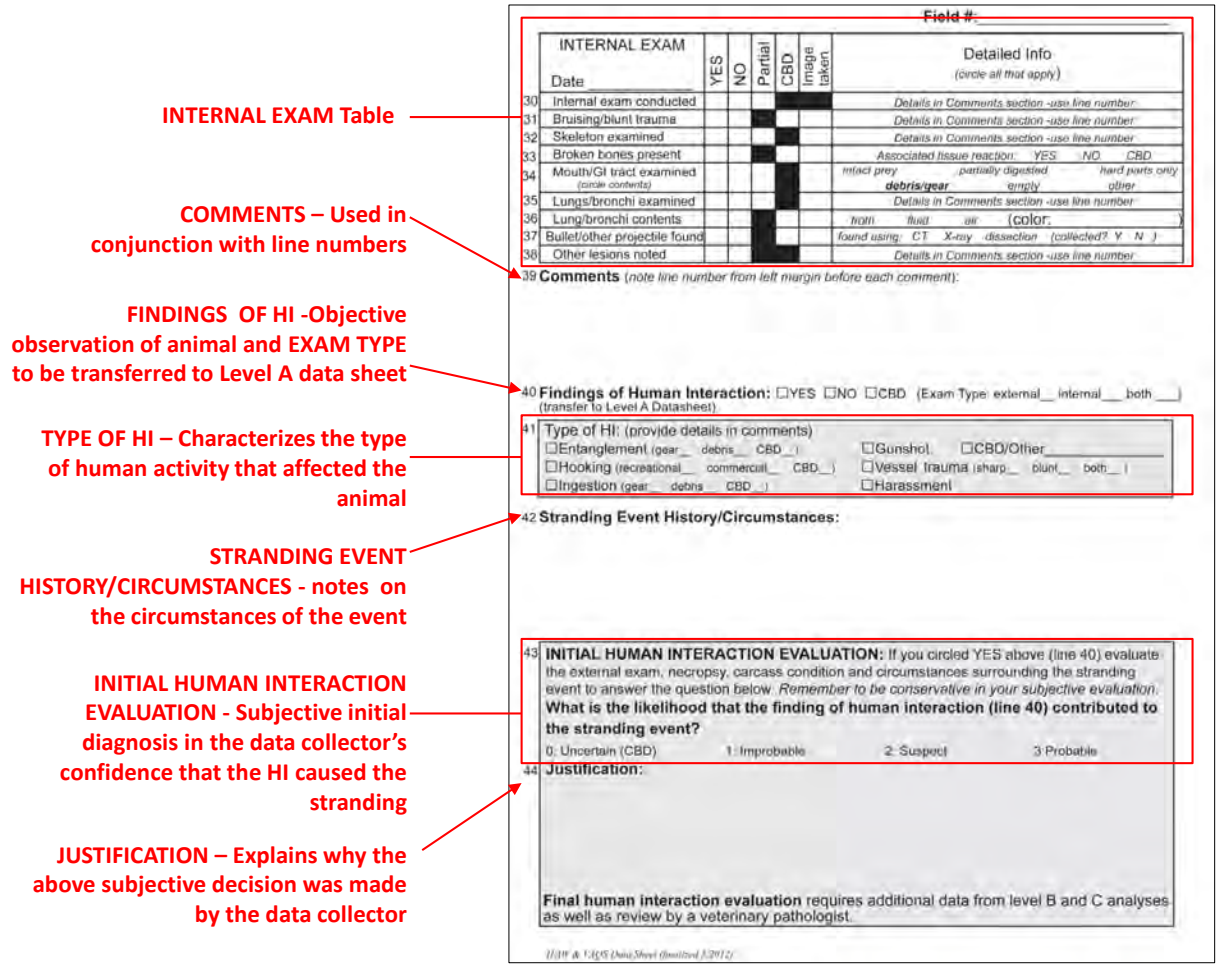
A reproducible copy of the data sheet can be found in Appendix I. The first step in understanding the data sheet and protocol is to read the instructions that accompany the data sheet. These instructions describe the protocol and define the terminology in the data sheet and each data field line by line. Although this may seem obvious, it is important to answer the questions that are being asked.

The data sheet (below) drives your examination by leading you through the protocol. Be systematic in your examination, conducting it the same way each time.

1. To begin, observe the whole animal. Provide an overall, general external description of what you see.
2. Next, examine each anatomical area thoroughly, recording your detailed observations.
3. If the animal has died or has been euthanized, conduct a thorough necropsy. Sample all evidence of HI, as well standard samples for histopathology, toxicology, genetics, *etc*.

Be sure to document your observations (both external and internal) through images (drawings, photos, videos) and detailed notes. Once you have completed your gross examination, review your observations to determine whether there are findings of human interaction (objective evaluation). Now, review the stranding history and all other available information to make an initial HI evaluation (subjective evaluation), regarding how likely it is that any observed HI contributed to the stranding event, providing detailed information to justify your findings.





Using the data sheet

The data sheet is designed to lead the examiner through the protocol step by step. Begin by reading and becoming familiar with the instructions that accompany the data sheet. Following the sheet each time an evaluation is done will help the examiner establish a routine in conducting the examination. Some basic guidelines will help develop consistent, systematic data collection:

- Be sure to fill in all spaces; do not leave any items blank
- Be objective in your examination
- Have the recorder repeat data back to the observer as it is written to reduce errors
- Provide as much detail as possible; use the comments section
- Event history is important – note any report details, witness accounts, fishing or other activities in the area, *etc*.

After finishing your observations, the examiner **must** evaluate the results:

Findings of Human Interaction and ***Exam Type***– based on **objective** observations, were there any findings of HI? (YES, NO, CBD). This is an objective analysis. It does not take into account the animal's physical condition, the timing of the human interaction with respect to the stranding or the circumstances surrounding the stranding. This simply indicates the presence or absence of signs of HI. Once you have determined the Findings

of HI, select the appropriate Type of Exam you conducted. If you ONLY conducted an external exam, check External. If you ONLY conducted an internal exam, check Internal (*e.g*. if the carcass lacked skin or pelt due to decomposition but you found plastic in the GI tract upon internal exam). If you conducted both an external and an internal exam check Both. The answers transfer to the NOAA Fisheries Level A data sheet.

Initial Human Interaction Evaluation and ***Justification*** – a **subjective,** but conservative, interpretation of the event**. Fill out this section if you checked YES for Findings of HI.** Using all of the information available, indicate the likelihood that the observed human interaction contributed to the stranding event. This is represented on a scale of 0-3 (0=Uncertain or CBD, 1=Improbable, 2= Suspect, 3=Probable). This scale functions as a confidence level. This subjective finding should take into account the experience level of the examiner, physical findings, stranding history and circumstances. **Most importantly, it takes into account the evaluator's level of experience. If you have not conducted many evaluations or are not familiar with the region, you may be unable to make an accurate evaluation and should circle CBD.** This section does not take into account results of level B and C analyses or review by veterinary pathologist which is why it is considered an INITIAL evaluation. Results of laboratory analyses, and the findings of veterinarians, pathologists and other experts should also be incorporated into the report when available and may either support or amend the original Initial Human Interaction Evaluation.

0. ***Uncertain (CBD)*** - You cannot provide an evaluation of the likelihood that human interaction contributed to the stranding (*e.g*. a Code 4 carcass is found with propeller marks; it is too decomposed to determine grossly whether the interaction occurred before or after death).
1. ***Improbable*** - It is unlikely that the observed human interaction contributed to the stranding and there are other gross findings that suggest an alternative cause for the stranding (*e.g*. there are healed entanglement scars on the flukes of a known humpback whale that died with a full-term fetus; it is unlikely that the past entanglement contributed to the stranding).
2. ***Suspect*** - It is possible that human interaction contributed to the stranding, but the findings of HI are weak and/or there are other findings that may have caused the stranding (*e.g*. there is a small amount of plastic found in an animal's stomach, but you are unsure of its effect and the animal is very thin with a high parasite level. Did the plastic ingestion cause the animal's decline or was a declining animal eating anything it could get?).
3. ***Probable*** - It is very likely that human interaction contributed to the stranding (*e.g*. a robust animal with a full stomach, froth in the lungs and marks that are consistent with entanglement and underwater entrapment).

For comprehensive and detailed instructions for completing the Human Interaction Evaluation data sheet, please see instructions in Appendix I.

How to describe and capture what you see

When describing the marks you see on an animal (natural or anthropogenic), be as detailed as possible. Note the location on the body relative to landmarks (*i.e.* distance from blowhole or anterior insertion of the dorsal fin), the size (length, width, and depth), shape, color, texture, smell, *etc*. If there appears to be a series of wounds or lesions, note the distance between them from either the leading or trailing edges of each lesion. Examiners often feel the need to use highly technical terms to describe what they see. This is not necessary; instead, use terms you are most comfortable with based on your level of experience. Plain, simple, accurate descriptions of what you see are important. The goal is to paint a picture that ensures all readers will understand what you saw. It is often useful to draw analogies to common objects in reference to such things as color and texture. For example, one can clearly picture the following observations noted on a common dolphin:

- A circular lesion on the right side of the peduncle at the lateral midline, 15cm cranial of the base of the flukes. The lesion is 3.4cm in diameter, characterized by an outer, dark gray line encircling the lesion and a pale gray-white scar-like inner ring. The center of the lesion appears ulcerated, open and deep red/ maroon similar to raspberry jam.
- 500-700ml of port wine colored fluid in peritoneal cavity.

Images and video

In addition to describing what you see, it is very important to document your observations through images and video. Digital, 35mm, and slide images are excellent means of capturing your observations. If possible, video taping or digitally recording images can also provide an outstanding record of your observations. If you don't have the means to photograph or video the animal, sketch what you see. These images are important in the human interaction evaluation. Documenting the evidence of HI, or the absence of that evidence, serves to support what you enter in the *Findings of HI* and *Initial HI Evaluation* fields on the data sheet. In addition, proper documentation allows those analyzing or utilizing HI data in the future to better understand and evaluate your conclusions. Images and video help ensure that data are not misinterpreted or misconstrued. When documenting your examination, remember these tips:

- Photograph/video everything – even if you don't see marks
- Always use label and scale in all images – label should include Field #, date of stranding, species, organization; close up shots should include the location of the lesion and/or name of the body part
- Be aware of shadows, glare and fingers – eliminate anything that obscures images and take images from different angles
- Draw and describe all marks - by concentrating on drawing an image, you make better observations of its location and size

Collecting physical evidence

In some instances, human interaction cases may be considered legal cases in which law enforcement officers will pursue the interaction as a criminal or civil offense. For this reason, it is important, whenever possible, to treat HI cases as possible legal cases. Evidence should be collected and handled in a systematic manner. Evidence can include any gear, debris, or other items removed from the animal, photos, and tissue samples, *etc*. Consult with your local law enforcement officials to determine their requirements for evidence handling. In the United States, NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement handles infractions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. They have specific evidence handling procedures and Chain of Custody

protocols and forms (See Appendix C of Geraci and Lounsbury 2005). These measures ensure any evidence collected in the course of your investigation is admissible in court should a legal case ensue. Basic guidelines for evidence handling include:

- Be sure to label all evidence and samples appropriately
- Secure all evidence/samples, limiting access to a small number of known individuals
- When transferring evidence/samples to researchers or labs, be sure to maintain the Chain of Custody by utilizing a Chain of Custody form and instructions.

Summary of tips for conducting an evaluation

- **Develop a routine** - follow it for every exam
- **Document everything**
- Photograph (include label & scale in every image)
- Measure marks/lesions (all dimensions)
- Sample (especially for histopathology)
- Collect other evidence and maintain chain of custody
- **Interact with others** - share unusual cases and lesions with other stranding personnel, fishery managers, and veterinarians
- **Understand and acknowledge confounding variables** - decomposition, scavenger damage, sunburn, and logistics are all things that make HI evaluation difficult. Never be afraid to score something as CBD

4.0 Recognizing Human Interactions

In this section of the handbook, several common types of human interaction are presented in detail. Important definitions and descriptions are provided in conjunction with a summary of evidence and marks commonly observed. Examples are provided to illustrate these points, and several full case studies are provided to illustrate the use of this protocol in recognizing, identifying, and documenting evidence of human interaction in stranded marine mammals.

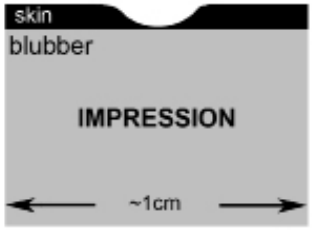
Definitions

Trauma: an injury (wound) to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent

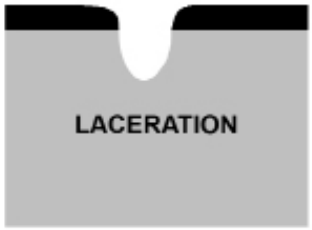
Blunt force trauma: Injury produced by a blunt object striking the body or impact of the body against a blunt object or surface (DiMaio and Dana 2007).

Sharp force trauma: an injury caused by a sharp or pointed object with sufficient force to create penetrating (incision/chop) wounds.

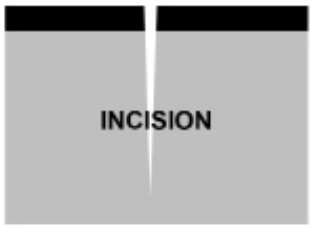
Impression: an impression occurs when a line, net, or other form of gear or debris leaves an indentation, but does not lacerate or abrade the skin/pelt. Impressions left by net or line usually wrap around the leading and/or trailing edges of a fin, flipper or fluke of cetaceans and around the necks of pinnipeds. Impressions on the leading edge of an appendage may line up with a similar mark on the trailing edge.



Laceration: a laceration is a tearing of the skin or pelt. Lacerations are caused by blunt trauma that results in stretching, tearing, crushing, shearing, or avulsion of tissue (DiMaio and Dana, 2007). We often think of lacerations as “cuts” into the skin; however, there is a distinction between a laceration and a cut or incision, which is a penetrating wound. On cross section, lacerations have rounded edges where a blunt object (*e.g.* net or line) has been pushed into the tissue until the surface has been broken or torn. Net and line usually leave linear lacerations.



Incision: a penetrating wound that has clean edges that show no rounding or tearing. Wounds from monofilament twine (alone or as a net) may appear incised, but , in fact, are lacerations. See penetrating wounds below.



Abrasion: an abrasion occurs when the skin is scraped or rubbed away by a rough surface (DiMaio and Dana, 2007), without an obvious laceration (*e.g.* when the rough surface of gear or debris slides against the skin). In some cases, compression of the skin, such as when gear encircles or constricts an appendage, can also cause abrasions. This type of wound commonly occurs with heavy line or twine entanglement, or when loose or trailing ends of gear/debris rub (abrade) parts of the body.

Penetrating wounds: a penetrating wound occurs when a foreign object punctures or deeply penetrates the body and can be characterized as one of three types: stab wound, incised wound

or chop wound (DiMaio and Dana, 2007). Penetrating wounds are similar to lacerations in that they break the surface of the skin; however, lacerations are more superficial.

Stab: stab wounds are generally characterized by a small external wound and a wound tract that extends deep into the tissue and often into the body cavity. In stab wounds the depth of the wound is greater than the length of the wound that is apparent on the skin (DiMaio and Dana, 2007). Stab wounds are generally caused by weapons such as gaffs, or knives, or projectiles such as arrows, or spears.

Incised: incised wounds are clean cuts into the skin which are longer on the skin surface than they are deep (the opposite of stab wounds) (DiMaio and Dana, 2007). These wounds are caused by sharp-edged objects such as knives or some propellers.

Chop: chop wounds are incised wounds that penetrate deep to the bone, leaving a groove or cut in the bone. Tangential chops may leave a disk-shaped wound where bone and/or skin has been removed. Chop wounds may appear similar to lacerations (causing more tearing of tissue) when dull-edged implements are used (DiMaio and Dana, 2007)

Gunshot wounds: gunshot wounds are a type of ballistic trauma produced by bullets or other missiles projected from a firearm. These wounds may be glancing or penetrating in nature. Gunshot wounds will have different characteristics based on the type of firearm, type of ammunition (bullet, shotgun pellet, *etc.*), angle of the shot, and the distance between the muzzle of the firearm and the body.

Healed HI scar: a healed human interaction scar is similar to a natural scar in pigmentation, but exhibits similar characteristics to the other types of lesions described here (*e.g.* linear scars on leading edges of appendages consistent with entanglement). It is important to document healed HI scars as well as recent, unhealed wounds. [NOTE: Evidence of HI, even if healed and not likely associated with the stranding event, should still be scored YES for HI.]

Antemortem: an antemortem injury or lesion was present/existed preceding death though not immediately (see *premortem* below, Merriam-Webster, 2012).

Premortem: a premortem injury or lesion is one that occurs immediately before death (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

Postmortem: a postmortem injury or lesion occurred after death (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

The forensic definitions above will be utilized throughout the remainder of this handbook to describe the different types of wounds or signs of human interaction that may be observed from a variety of causes.

4.1 Fishery Interaction

Fishery interaction is probably the most subtle and varied form of human interaction that occurs. It is easier to recognize in cetaceans than in any other marine mammal group because marks are more easily made and remain evident for a longer time in soft, smooth cetacean skin. In other marine mammals (pinnipeds, sirenians), it is more difficult to determine if a fishery interaction has occurred without gear present on or in the animal. Fine, subtle marks are often not evident on fur or, tough, thick hide.

Definitions

To fully understand the complexities of fishery interaction, there are several terms with which the examiner should be familiar.

Gear is any type of commercial or recreational fishing equipment (nets, buoys, line, hooks, lures, pots, or traps, *etc.*).

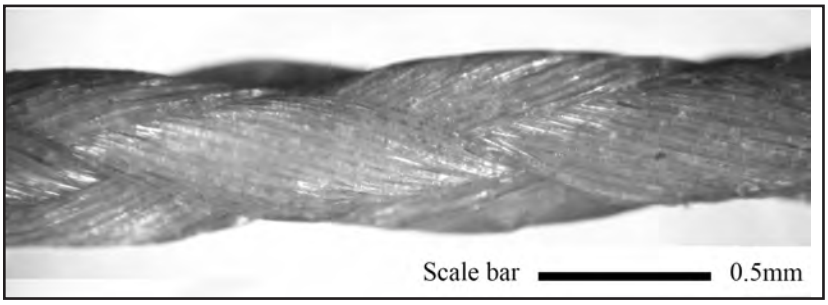
Line (right) is made up of many individual strands or filaments of a material (*e.g.* hemp, cotton, nylon, and polypropylene). The filaments are twisted into strands that are then twisted or braided into rope. Line is larger in diameter and heavier than twine (see below). Line can leave a large impression, but more often leaves an abrasion or 'rub' mark. It is used for moorings, towing, forms the float and lead line of nets, and attaches buoys and anchors. Some gear is comprised primarily of line, such as pot and trap fisheries. Line can be sinking (*e.g.* nylon), floating (*e.g.* polypropylene), or neutrally buoyant in seawater.

Twine is small diameter line that can be multifilament or monofilament. Twine is constructed of various materials and is combined in different ways. Nets are often comprised of one or more types of twine. This differentiation between 'twine' and 'line' is used by the commercial fishing industry and will likely be used by commercial fishers.

Monofilament twine (right) is a single, smooth strand of nylon that leaves a straight, narrow furrow, impression, or laceration. Heavy (larger diameter > 1mm) monofilament twine tends to leave impressions, while lighter (smaller diameter < 1mm) monofilament twine tends to penetrate into the flesh and leave lacerations.

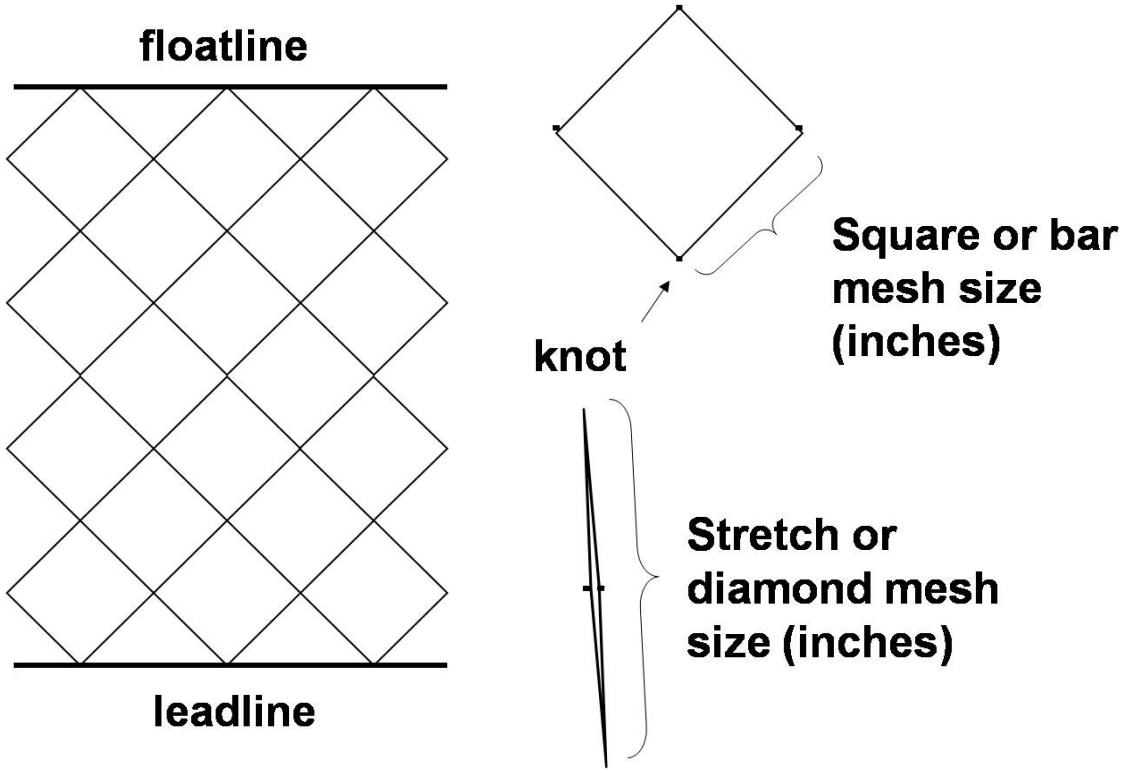
Multifilament twine (left) is made up of multiple strands of material that are twisted or braided together. Multifilament twine can leave distinctive impressions (a series of parallel, angled lines or ovals). Multifilament twine can also cause lacerations or abrasions depending on the diameter and nature of the entanglement.

Microfilament twine (right) is a fairly new product. It is very narrow in diameter, but extraordinarily strong. It has the fine diameter of a monofilament twine, but is actually

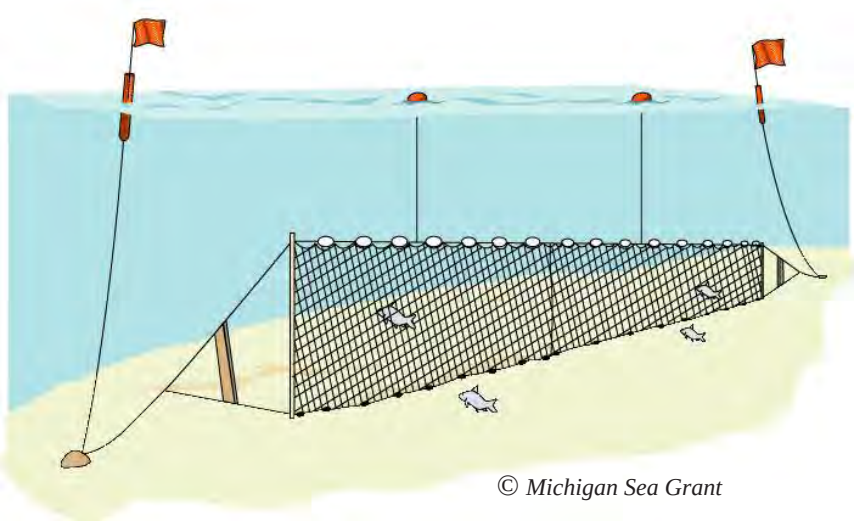


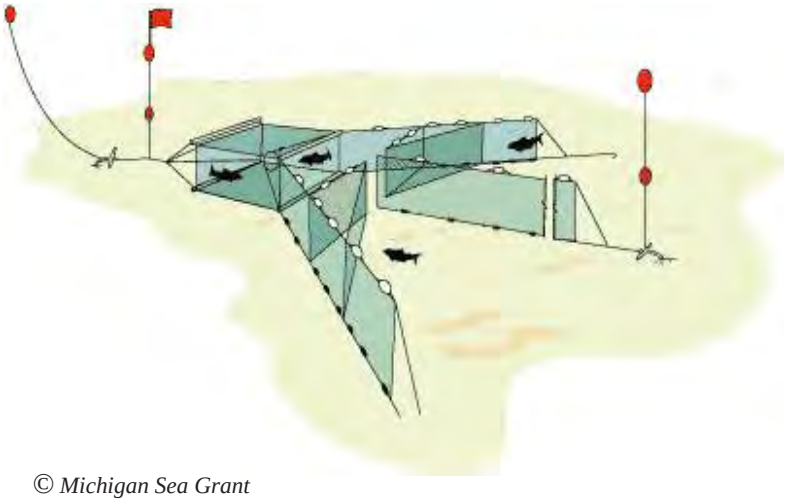
multifilament, which gives it an abrasive texture. This very fine twine can cause extensive tissue damage. The narrow diameter, strength, and texture of this twine cause it to act like a saw or cutting blade. Microfilament twine most often causes lacerations and can rapidly, partially or completely, amputate an appendage.

Nets (below) can be made of either monofilament or multifilament twine and have various characteristics based on: twine diameter, square mesh size (measuring knot to knot), and stretch mesh size (taking one square of mesh, measuring diagonally between opposite knots of a mesh pulled taut).



Gill net (right) is usually made up of 1 or more panels of monofilament net with a buoyant line at the top (float line) and a weighted line at the bottom (lead line). The mesh and twine sizes vary according to the target species and environmental conditions. Gillnets can be set at/in the upper, mid, or bottom of the water column. Many gillnets are anchored on one or both ends with cement, chain, or a standard anchor. Non-anchored gillnets are called drift nets.

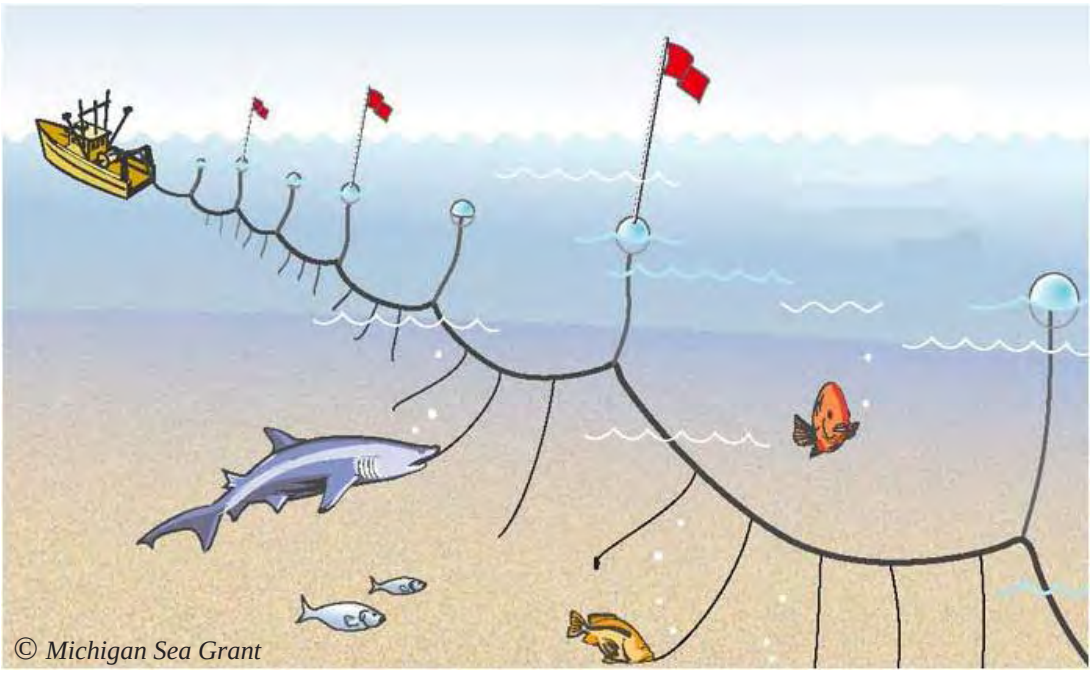




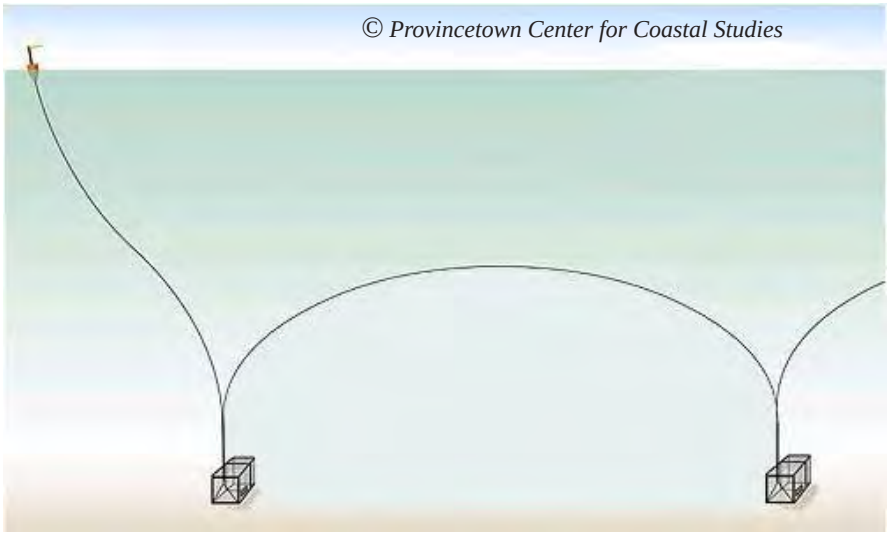
There is usually a buoy system on both ends. Animals can become entangled in the net, the anchoring system, the vertical (buoy) line, or the surface (buoy) system.

Fixed nets (left) are often called fish traps. They include pound nets, weirs, and several other types. Fixed nets are staked, moored, or anchored and are not moved. They usually have a straight leader line that directs fish toward the trap (or heart) part of the net. These nets are usually made of heavy twisted twine and the mesh sizes vary in different parts of the net and in different geographic regions. Animals can become entangled in the leader line, the anchoring system, or in the fish trap.

Hooks can be used in both recreational or commercial gear and includes both a single hook on a rod and reel ('rod and reel' fishery-standard recreational gear) and multiple hooks on line/twine. Longline (below) is commercial hook gear with numerous baited hooks on gangions or short pieces of line or twine that are attached to a central main line at regular intervals. The central line may be comprised of line or, less often, heavy monofilament, and the gangions are usually heavy monofilament twine. Some longlines are marked with light sticks which attract the target fish. Animals can become entangled in the central line, buoy lines, in the gangion and hook system, become hooked, or ingest a hook or light stick.



Pot (trawl) (right) is used for crabs, lobster, whelk, and other invertebrates as well as fish. When pots are attached together, the gear is called a trawl. The lines between the pots are called ground lines. These lines may be sinking lines that sit on the bottom between pots (mandated in Massachusetts) or buoyant lines that float within the water column. The trawl may have one or more buoy lines. Animals can become entangled in the ground line, vertical (buoy) line, or in the pot itself (usually going after bait).



Stranding responders should familiarize themselves with the types of fishing gear present in their area. Local fishers, fishery managers, enforcement officers, and commercial fishing supply houses are good sources of information. Establishing positive working relationships with local fishers and managers will not only aid in understanding gear types, but also prove useful in many aspects of stranding response. Fishers are often the best sources of information regarding activities in your area, such as changing conditions and new fishing gear. [FAO has produced a Fishery Manager's Guidebook (fisheries technical paper 424) which is available online at www.FAO.ORG. Basic gear types are described and illustrated in the document]

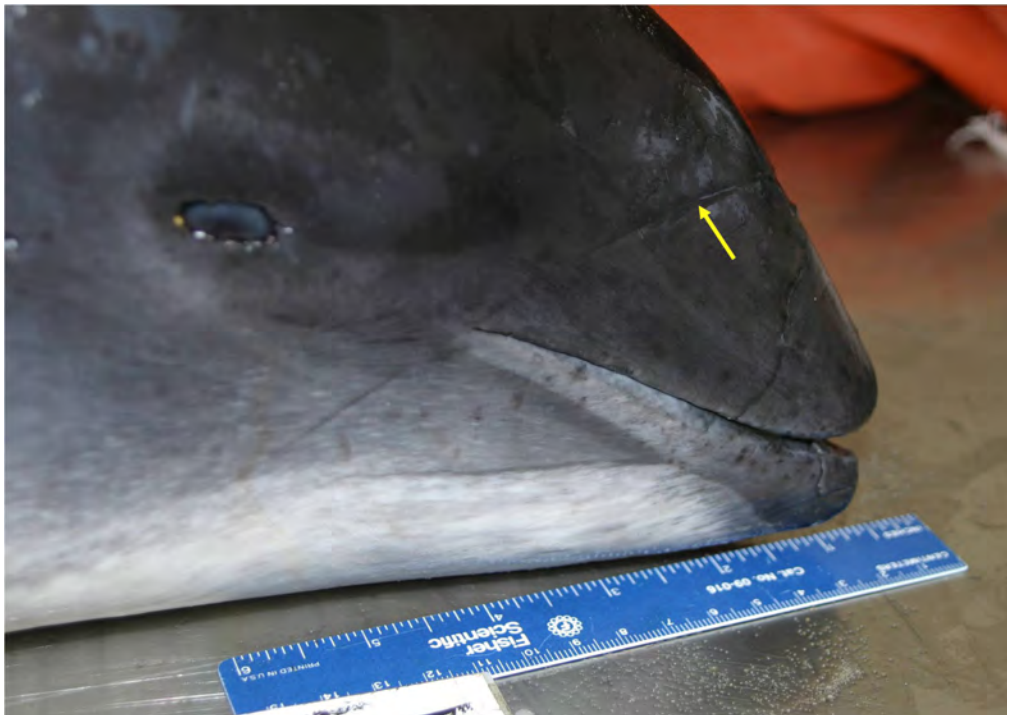
Examples of fishery interaction

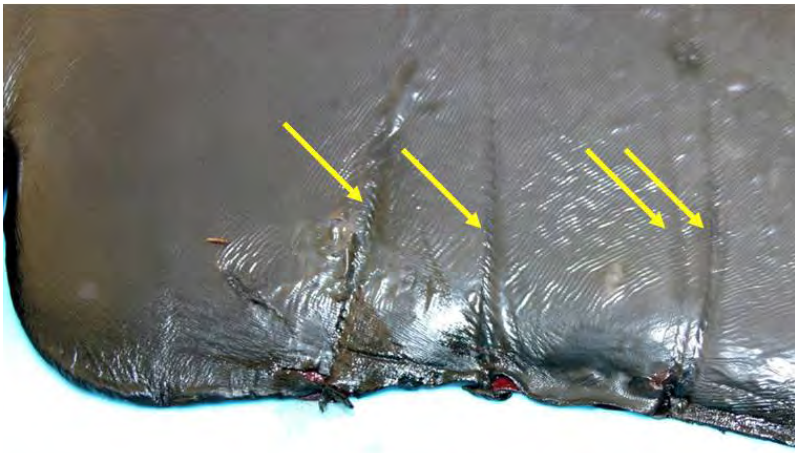
Entanglement in fishing gear can leave many different types of marks on marine mammals. These marks primarily occur on the edges of the head, appendages and peduncle and can generally be categorized as impressions, lacerations, or abrasions. Evidence of entanglement varies by the type of gear, the species involved, and the location and nature of the entanglement. The following examples briefly highlight the most common entanglement injuries observed.

I**mpressions** are most often found on the head and leading and trailing edges of appendages. It is uncommon that an impression occurs only on a lateral surface (such as the thorax, side of the head, or on the flat surfaces of the flukes or flippers) without a corresponding mark on a leading and/or trailing edge. The diameter of the twine (twine size), the amount of struggle by the animal, the drag on the animal, and the shape of the affected body part all dictate whether gear produces an impression or a laceration. Impressions quickly disappear as an animal becomes desiccated or sunburned. When taking pictures of impressions, be careful of glare produced by lights and camera flash. Take images from several angles. Often an oblique angle without camera flash produces the best results.

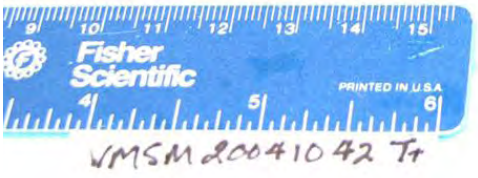
*Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with a MONOFILAMENT IMPRESSION on the rostrum creating a straight furrow (▬▬▬) in the skin (left; © Virginia Aquarium).*

*Harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) with a MONOFILAMENT IMPRESSION across the rostrum (right; © Virginia Aquarium). Porpoises are notorious for NOT struggling if entangled in gear and often show only impressions.*





MULTIFILAMENT TWINE IMPRESSIONS appear as a series of parallel, angled lines or ovals in a furrow (ᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐᵐ) (left; © Virginia Aquarium).

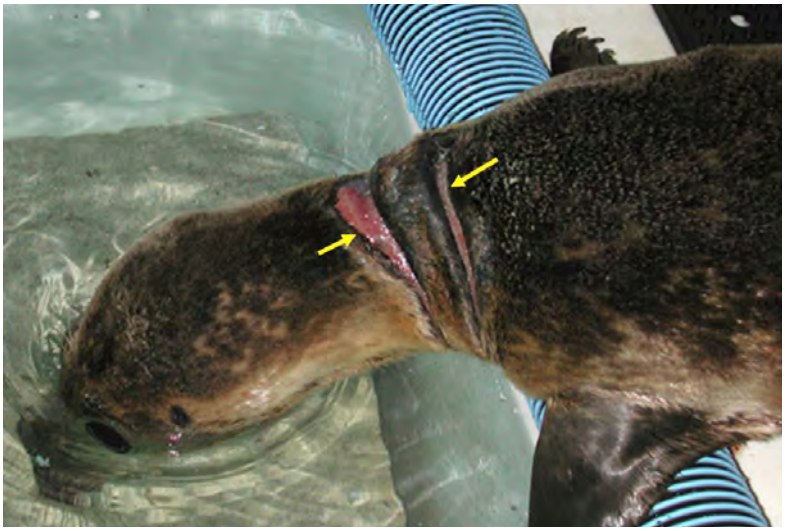


*The IMPRESSION on the dorsal fin of this bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) is thicker than most monofilament seen in the area (VA), but there are no details (such as parallel, linear, diagonal marks) within the impression to indicate that the twine was multifilament. There are similar lesions on the flukes. Detailed Exam: YES for signs of HI, Type of Lesion = Impression, Gear = Net, Twine Type = CBD, (right; © Virginia Aquarium).*

LINE can leave IMPRESSIONS with a series of parallel, angled lines or ovals (larger than twine), or abrasions like these around the base of the peduncle (left; © Virginia Aquarium). Note also the tooth rake marks on the dorsal keel (see section 5.1 for more examples).

Lacerations are injuries which occur when the skin/pelt is penetrated. Net and line usually leave linear lacerations. These lesions may be either evenly spaced or bunched along an appendage and may be accompanied by impressions. They may be associated with twine, net, or line. Lacerations associated with entangling forms of HI most often occur on the leading edges of appendages and on the rostrum/snout and mandible.

*Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with lacerations on the mandible and rostrum associated with fishery interactions (right). The animal also had several impressions encircling the head. It may have hit a net, received the lacerations, and then broken through the meshes until the head was caught. Sometimes the head goes through the net and the animal gets caught at the dorsal fin. In pinnipeds, the neck, appendages (especially between the claws), and the mouth are the areas most susceptible to lacerations (© Virginia Aquarium).*



*Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) with LACERATIONS around the neck (left) from entanglement in a gill net (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*MICROFILAMENT BRAIDED TWINE, sold under names such as PowerPro™, Spiderwire™ and Firewire™, is a very strong, abrasive twine marketed to recreational rod and reel fishers. Experience with it in strandings is limited, but devastating, as seen in the lacerations on the flukes and dorsal fin of this bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*, below; © Virginia Aquarium).*

Abrasions that are associated with fishery interactions tend to occur when heavy (thicker diameter) twine or line is involved in an entanglement. They can occur at the primary entanglement site (appendages, head, *etc.*) and also along other surfaces of the body (flat, lateral surfaces of appendages and body) when gear is trailing from an animal and continually scraping against a body part.

*This stranded humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) had deep lacerations consistent with entanglement at the angle of the mouth on both the left and right sides. The gear apparently rubbed against the ventrum causing* ABRASIONS *on the ventral grooves (left; ©NC Wildlife Resources Commission).*

*The minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*; right, below) stranded on Nauset Beach, Orleans, MA in June 1999. Although no gear was present on the animal, abrasions and lacerations were present on the head, base of dorsal fin, flukes, peduncle, and left flipper. The ABRASIONS were consistent with entanglement in line that went through the mouth and extended out the left gape and across the body surface wrapping around the dorsal fin (right).The nature of the entanglement and staining in underlying tissues suggested that the entanglement was antemortem (©IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

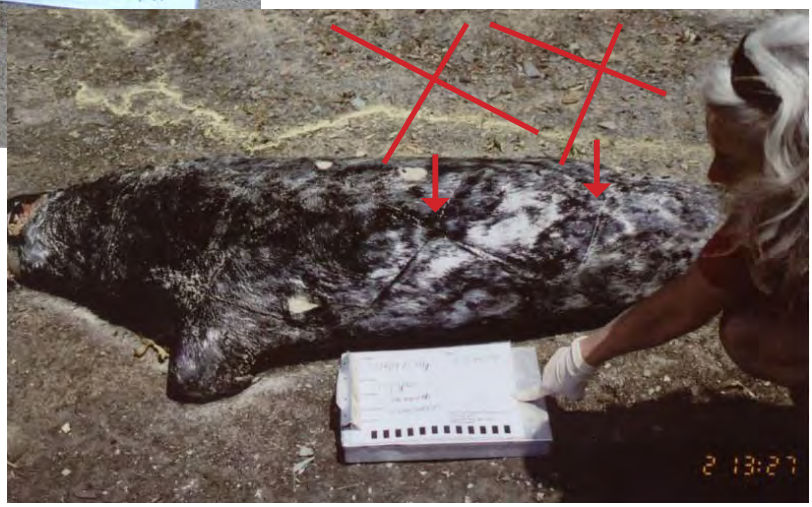
Remember that even when HI wounds are healed, it is important to record your observations. Healed HI scars represent human interaction and should be recorded as such, regardless of whether or not the HI may have contributed to the stranding.

*A short-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*) with scars consistent with healed trauma from prior hooking injury on the right lip (left; © NC Wildlife Resources Commission). Several teeth in the upper jaw beneath the healed lip scars were broken, a classic sign of a hooking entanglement. Injuries of this type on pilot whales are consistent with longline entanglement; however, without gear present it is most conservative to note hook as the type of gear without being more specific.*

*Common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) that stranded in Virginia shows more subtle hooking (likely longline) entanglement scars than the pilot whale above. Teeth were broken between the two arrows on the upper lip. On cross section, the small white scar above the eye was curved, as if made by a hook (right; © Virginia Aquarium).*

*Fin whale flukes (*Balaenoptera physalus*) showing linear entanglement SCARS across the leading edge at the fluke insertion (left; © Virginia Aquarium).*

On pinnipeds and other marine mammals with pelts, fishery interaction is most obvious when gear is still attached. In some cases, gear will leave impressions and lacerations in the pelt that are obvious. Many times, there will be no external evidence once gear is removed.



*Gray seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) with large mesh, heavy TWINE IMPRESSIONS on the pelt, consistent with a local weir fishery which is a staked net fishery (left and below; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research). Detailed exam: YES for signs of HI, Type of Lesion = Impression, Gear = Net, Twine Type = multifilament.*

*Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) flipper with fine twine GILL NET ENTANGLEMENT (left, © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

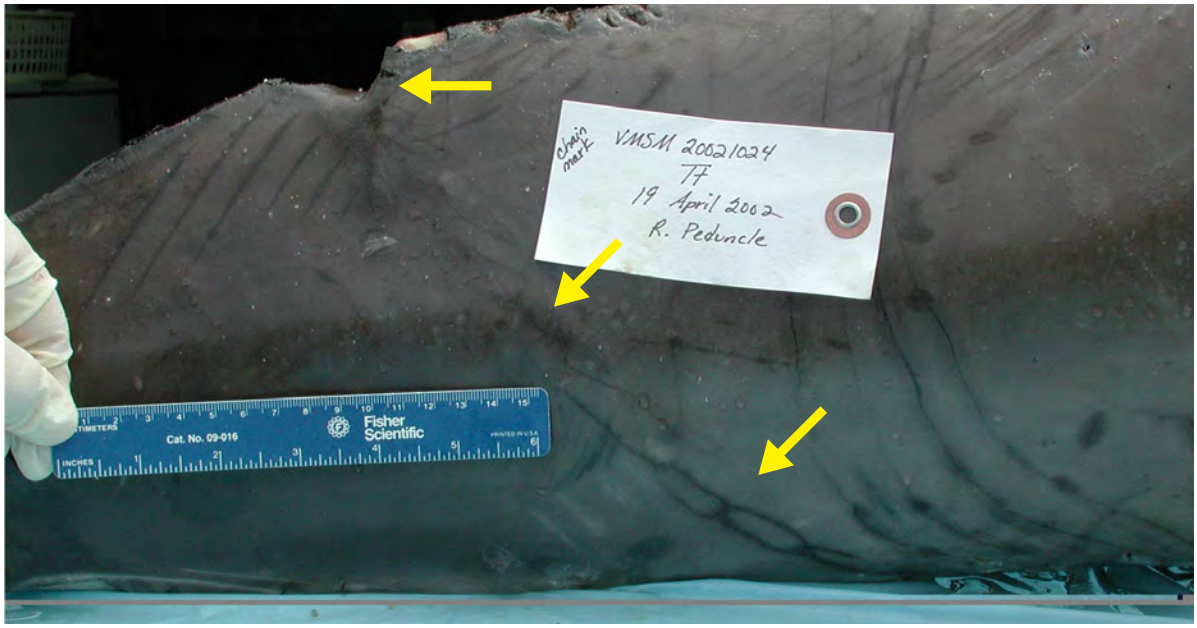
*Live gray seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) with entangling GILL NET gear. Note the gray float in the image at right. If constricting gear is removed, an animal that is not otherwise debilitated can recover without intervention (© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

*Neck of a harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) showing laceration from monofilament gillnet gear (left; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

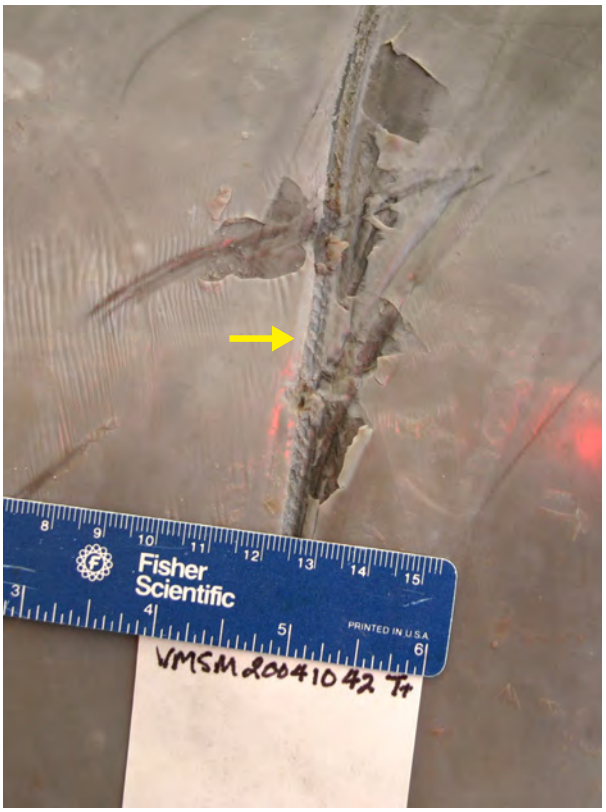
Harbor seal (Phoca vitulina) with a neck entanglement in a POT BUOY LINE (below; © Riverhead Foundation, Riverhead, NY).

It is important to note that nets may leave different types of marks on an animal depending on the material from which they are made and the body part with which they interact. Entanglement in a net may leave impressions on an animal, or may cause lacerations or abrasions, or all three on the same animal in different areas. In many cases, a combination of lesions is associated with entanglement in a net. Nets made of monofilament may leave multiple impressions or lacerations, but each lesion is a straight furrow. Nets will usually leave a different set of marks than a single piece of twine. On cetaceans, look for 'X' shaped lesions (especially on the leading edges of appendages), and impressions of mesh or darker points along a linear impression indicating a knot. Net will often bunch up at the widest point of an appendage, at the insertion of an appendage, or on the body. Look around the head, at the insertion of the flippers and flukes, and base of the dorsal fin for bunching.

*The flukes of this bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) have a laceration on the leading edge with granulomatous tissue (inflammatory reaction) indicative of a long-term entanglement. It is likely that whatever material caused the lesion was carried by the animal for a long time (weeks to months). Twine and line of differing diameters can cause this type of lesion. Since there are also lesions on the other fluke blade and on other parts of the animal, it was scored as a fishery interaction, but the origin of this particular lesion was unknown (right; © Virginia Aquarium).*



*Peduncle of a bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) showing an UNKNOWN MARK possibly made by chain. The origin of this mark would be noted as "CBD" on the datasheet unless the observer had previous experience with a lesion like this from a known source (above; © Virginia Aquarium).*



Above, the skin of a bottlenose dolphin (Tursiops truncatus) shows MULTIFILAMENT NET IMPRESSIONS. Note the diagonal twist marks within the impression. In Virginia, this twine is consistent with pound net gear (© Virginia Aquarium).

*Ventral flukes of a bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) showing MONOFILAMENT NET IMPRESSIONS consistent with gill net entanglement. Note the single furrow of the monofilament above compared with the 'hatch marks' within the furrow of the mutlifilament marks above left (© Virginia Aquarium).*

When a net is recovered from a stranded animal, it is important to measure both the size of the overall net (dimensions of the float or lead line or number of meshes in height/width) and the size of each mesh (stretch and square size). Also note where in the gear the animal was entangled. Be sure to document the animal in the gear, and then thoroughly document the animal and gear separately once the gear is removed (Often a heavily entangled animal will have few obvious marks present once the gear is removed). This process will allow examiners to characterize the types of wounds caused by that particular type of gear. This case can then be compared with animals that strand without gear in an attempt to characterize what type of gear may have been involved. Collected gear should be tagged, secured, and transferred to the regional NOAA Gear Lab for identification (contact your regional coordinator for address).

Fishery interaction summary

Characteristics of entanglement are similar in cetaceans and pinnipeds, though the presence of fur in pinnipeds makes lesion detection difficult.

External evidence in cetaceans:

- Gear present
- Linear impressions
- Linear lacerations
- Encircling lesion (constrictions) most commonly pectoral flippers
- Abrasions

- Wounds usually most prominent on the head and leading edges of appendages

Internal evidence in cetaceans:

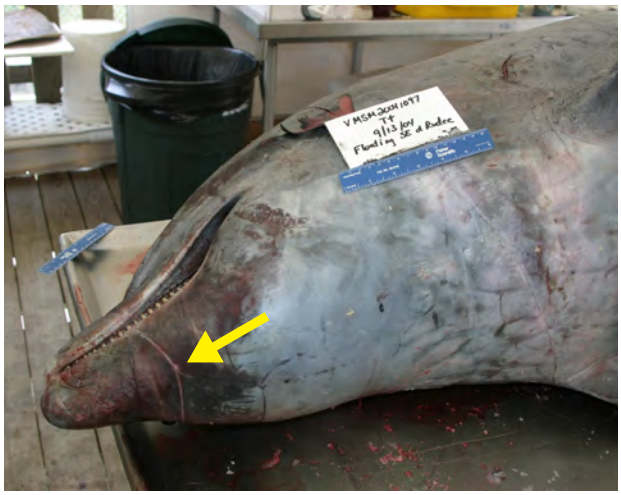
- Subdermal hemorrhage and bruising
- Hemorrhage associated with lesions

External evidence in pinnipeds:

- Gear present
- Lesions on body (impressions, lacerations & constrictions)

Internal evidence in pinnipeds:

- Subdermal hemorrhage and bruising
- Hemorrhage associated with lesions



*This bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) was moderately decomposed externally and had twisted twine impressions at the tip of the mandible consistent with entanglement (above). A thorough internal examination revealed subdermal tissue staining consistent with hemorrhage behind the head (left). When a cetacean's rostrum/mandible are entangled ante- or premortem, struggling often results in hemorrhage observed grossly as tissue staining (©Virginia Aquarium).*

In some cases, the external exam may ***suggest*** fishery interaction, but not be clearly conclusive, (*e.g*. when only one or two marks are observed or when marks do not occur in the areas where you expect them to occur. In these cases, as in all cases, it is important to complete a full examination before drawing any objective or subjective conclusions. There are some observations that, while not considered ***evidence*** of fishery interaction on their own, are considered findings that are ***consistent with*** fishery interaction. These findings can be used to support findings of fishery interaction and include:

- Froth in lungs
- Evidence of recent feeding
- Robust body condition
- Other, similar cases at the same time in the same place

Perhaps the best way to understand how to examine marine mammals for signs of human interaction is to review case studies. The aim of every exam is to collect data and documentation in enough detail to allow an outside observer to review and understand the case at any point in time. While confounding variables (see Chapter 5.0) may limit or prohibit this ability, sufficient case data should be available for any animal in relatively good condition that has been completely examined. Regardless of the circumstances, the examiner should always provide enough data and accompanying documentation to allow an outside reviewer to both analyze the case AND understand the conclusions that were made and why. The case study offered below is based upon photo-documentation, data sheets and necropsy reports from a stranded marine mammal. All comments in the text can be found in the appropriate locations on the accompanying data sheet. Note that the information in this and other case studies in this document follow the general flow of the datasheet.

Case Study #1: Fishery interaction on a dolphin

CASE HISTORY: The bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*; VMSM 20031091) carcass was reported to Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Team (VAQS) by the general public on the afternoon of 27 October 2003. The carcass was transported to VAQS. It was photographed, measured, and evaluated for HI and then stored in a walk-in cooler until necropsy on 30 October 2003 (it is important to note the storage conditions on the datasheet). Histopathology samples were collected and submitted to the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP); results were received in May 2004.

EXAM INFORMATION (lines 1-7):
Condition code: 3
Preservation: fresh
Body Condition: not emaciated
Integument: normal
% Skin missing: <10%

This dolphin was a very early condition code 3 (moderately decomposed). The tongue was not bloated, but the carcass had some odor and the genital slit was slightly bloated. The carcass

was examined fresh and was not previously frozen. It was not emaciated. The skin (integument) was not sunburned or peeling and there were no gross abnormalities. There was no skin missing. All images were taken with the VAQS digital camera and were stored at the VAQS facility. (Note: all of these data are captured at the top of page one of the Human Interaction Evaluation data sheet, See page 32.)

Be sure to complete lines 4-6 on the data sheet which detail the external condition of the animal: this section adds information critical to understanding the quality of the human interaction evaluation - information that cannot be obtained from the Level A data sheet. For example: Condition Code, which takes into account both the external and internal condition of the animal, can represent a broad spectrum of circumstances. A code 3 (moderately decomposed) bottlenose dolphin could be very close to pristine with only minimal bloating and odor. This animal may have its skin intact and may look very much as it did when it was alive. Alternatively, a code 3 bottlenose dolphin could also have almost none of its skin remaining or be severely sunburned and desiccated. While the former example ("fresher" code 3) may be easy to fully examine for HI, the latter example ("late" code 3) may be very difficult to evaluate for subtle marks associated with some fishery interactions. Thus it is very important to note the key aspects of the external exam noted in lines 4-6.

WHOLE BODY EXAM (lines 8-16):

- Appendages
- Pelt
- Body sliced
- Gear/debris
- External pathology
- Natural markings
- HI lesions
- Scavenger damage

Before beginning a detailed exam, take a look at the whole animal. If possible, look at all angles and surfaces. Following your whole animal exam, check the most appropriate choice for each category (lines 8-15). If you check YES or CBD, describe what you see in the Comments section on the next page, noting the appropriate line number. Indicate whether you collected an image of an area with a Y (Yes) or N (No) in the Image taken section. If you are unable to examine any areas (NE), note the details in the Comments section.

If there is evidence of predation or scavenger damage, circle the number(s) that correspond to the anatomical areas (found in table below) where evidence is seen and note details of the damage in Comments.

In this case, natural markings (tooth rakes) and HI lesions from fishery interaction were noted during the whole body exam. Notes for each observation are in the Comments section on the second page of the data sheet.

DETAILED EXAM OF ANATOMICAL AREAS:
Signs of human interaction noted on specific body parts are captured in the Detailed Exam of Anatomical Areas section of the data sheet. Follow the lines in the table to direct your exam. To complete this section, examine each body part closely on all surfaces for any evidence of human interaction. Examine the animal carefully starting at the head and working caudally down the right and then left side, finishing with the tail or flukes. For this section, indicate whether you observe any SIGNS OF HUMAN INTERACTION in each anatomical area by checking the YES, NO, or CBD column. If you were not able to examine an area, check NE; if it does not apply to your animal, check NA (*e.g.* pinnipeds do not have a dorsal fin). Be consistent; examine anatomical areas in the same order each time you do an exam. In this case, evidence of human interaction was noted on the following body parts:

- Rostrum
- Mandible
- Head
- Flippers
- Dorsal fin
- Peduncle
- Flukes

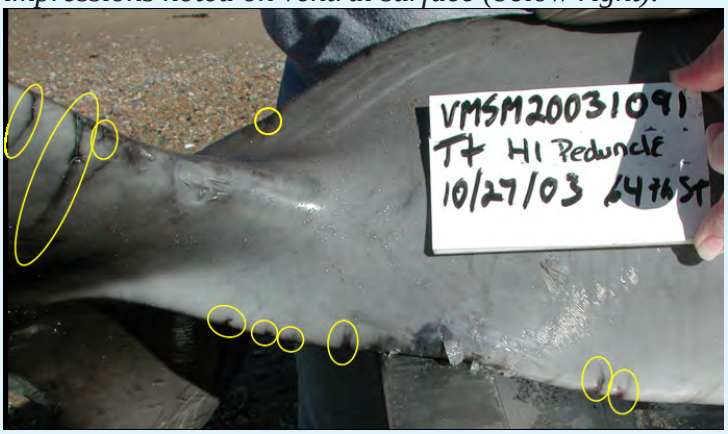
All observed signs of HI were impressions or lacerations consistent with monofilament net entanglement.

Mandible and rostrum: Lacerations on the mandible and impressions on the melon and rostrum. Unaltered image is above left and marks are highlighted in the altered image is above right (all images in the case study ©Virginia Aquarium).

Dorsal fin: Lacerations were present on the leading and trailing edges and impressions were evident on the lateral surface (original image-left & highlighted image-below left).

Right flipper: The mark at the insertion of the flipper encircled the appendage and caused a laceration at the caudal insertion. Lacerations were present on the leading edge (original image-above right & highlighted right).

Peduncle and leading edge of the right fluke: Impressions and lacerations present on the peduncle. Additional lacerations present on the leading edge of fluke and impressions found on the ventral fluke surface (below left). Ventral right flukes: Lacerations noted on leading edge and impressions noted on ventral surface (below right).



PROTOCOL FOR EXAMINING MARINE MAMMALS FOR SIGNS OF HUMAN INTERACTION

Exam Information *(fill in or circle most appropriate)*

1 Field #: VMSM20031091 Species: *Tursiops truncatus*

2 Examiner: Sally Smith Recorder: Pam Jones

3 Date of exam: 27 Oct 2003 Condition code (at exam): 1 2 (3) 4 5 CBD

4 Preservation: alive (fresh) frozen frozen/thawed Body condition: emaciated (not emaciated) CBD

5 Documentation: (digital) print slide video Image disposition: VMSM

6 Integument : (normal) abnormal decomposed % Skin missing: (<10%) 10-25% 25-50% >50%

7

Explanation of terms:
YES = I have examined the area and found signs of human interaction
NO = I have examined the area did not find signs of human interaction
CBD = I have examined the area and could not determine whether there were signs of human interaction (i.e. the part was missing, degraded, or signs were ambiguous)
NE =I did not examine the area
NA = this animal doesn't normally have that part (i.e. seals have no dorsal, dolphins have no rear flippers)

	WHOLE BODY EXAM	YES	NO	CBD	NE	NA	Image taken
8	Appendage(s) removed / Mutilation *(with instrument)*		x				
9	Pelt removed / Mutilation *(with instrument)*					x	
10	Body sliced / Mutilation *(with instrument)*		x				
11	Gear / Debris present on animal *(including tags)*		x				
12	Gear / Debris retained *(name & contact info in Comments)*					x	
13	External pathology *(pox, tattoo lesion, abscess)*		x				
14	Natural markings *(scars, tooth rakes, unusual pigmentation)*	x					y
15	HI lesions *(fishery, gunshot, propeller, healed HI scar, brand)*	x					y

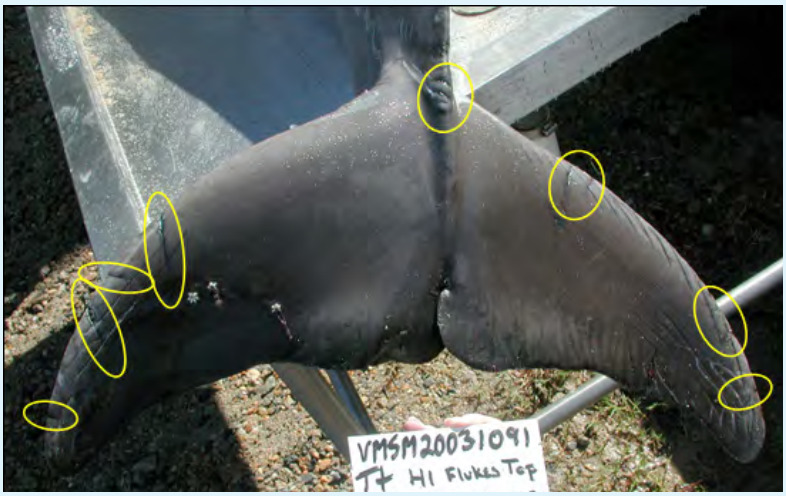
16 Predation / scavenger damage *(circle all anatomical areas where damage hinders evaluation; numbers coincide with anatomical areas below)*: 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 (NONE)

FILL IN TABLE FOR **ALL POSSIBLE FINDINGS OF HI**
Do not use for natural markings/pathology.

						Type of Lesion					Origin of Lesion: Gear - Twine Type						Origin of Lesion: Other			
	DETAILED EXAM OF ANATOMICAL AREAS	YES	NO	CBD	NE/NA	Impression/ Laceration	Penetrating wound	Healed HI scar	Abrasion	Other / CBD	Twine / line	Net	other / CBD	Monofilament	Multifilament	CBD	Propeller	Gunshot	Other / CBD	Image taken?
17	Rostrum/snout	x				x						x		x						y
18	Mandible	x				x			x			x		x						y
19	Head	x				x						x		x						y
20	L Front appendage	x				x						x		x						y
21	R Front appendage	x				x						x		x						y
22	Body R L		x																	
23	Dorsum/dorsal fin	x				x						x		x						y
24	Ventrum		x																	
25	Peduncle	x				x						x		x						y
26	L Rear appendage				x															
27	R Rear appendage				x															
28	Flukes/tail	x				x						x		x						y
29																				

IFAW & VAQS Data Sheet (finalized 5/2012)

Dorsal flukes: Leading edge impressions and lacerations are evident. Note the tooth rakes on the right leading edge and distal third of the fluke (right).



For each mark you observe, proceed to the Type of Lesion columns and check all that apply (*e.g.* impression, laceration, pentrating wound, *etc*.). If necessary, refer to the data sheet instructions to review the definitions for the different types of lesions (wounds). Once you determine the type of lesion, move to the Origin of Lesion section and check all that apply. Remember to be conservative. If you are unsure of the origin (source) of a lesion, choose CBD.

Every area that scores YES or CBD should have an IMAGE TAKEN with identifying information (field number, date of stranding, species, examiner, subject of image, *etc*.) and a scale (small ruler or something of known size). If film or disk space is not limited, take pictures of all areas. Note Y (yes) or N (no) in the IMAGE TAKEN column.

Every area that scores YES or CBD should have a comment associated with it. Number each comment with the corresponding line number for that anatomical area. Be sure to provide detailed information, such as the location on the anatomical area (*e.g*. leading edge of right pectoral flipper, measurements, *etc*.).

INTERNAL EXAMINATION – When dealing with a carcass, an evaluation is not complete without a thorough necropsy (internal examination). (Obviously, for live animals, an external exam is likely the only option (unless you have access to radiography and other diagnostics). Some forms of interaction are only evident through internal exam (*e.g*. ingestion of debris or gear), thus the Findings of Human Interaction (objective conclusion) for an animal with NO external evidence of HI may be changed to YES if necropsy reveals internal evidence such as debris ingestion. Likewise, the Initial Human Interaction Evaluation (subjective conclusion) may change if an animal with external evidence of HI (YES) is found to be suffering from disease, pregnancy complications, or injuries that likely contributed to the stranding. When this occurs, note that the objective evaluation remains YES, but the subjective evaluation changes since a more likely cause for the stranding is determined. Some internal observations can support a diagnosis of HI (*e.g*. for fishery interactions-full stomach, froth in lungs). Be sure to note the date of the internal exam in the INTERNAL EXAM box.

Field #: VMSM20031091

	INTERNAL EXAM Date 30 Oct 2003	YES	NO	Partial	CBD	Image taken	Detailed Info (circle all that apply)
30	Internal exam conducted	x					Details in Comments section -use line number
31	Bruising/blunt trauma		x				Details in Comments section -use line number
32	Skeleton examined	x					Details in Comments section -use line number
33	Broken bones present		x				Associated tissue reaction: YES NO CBD
34	Mouth/GI tract examined (circle contents)			x			(intact prey) partially digested hard parts only **debris/gear** empty other
35	Lungs/bronchi examined	x					Details in Comments section -use line number
36	Lung/bronchi contents	x					(froth) fluid air (color: white & pink)
37	Bullet/other projectile found		x				found using: CT X-ray dissection (collected? Y N)
38	Other lesions noted		x				Details in Comments section -use line number

39 **Comments** (*note line number from left margin before each comment*):

17-29. all marks consistent with monofilament net
34. 8 intact fish in fore-stomach (menhaden?), parasites in main stomach, fluid in main & pyloric, intestines had contents
36. bloody fluid in pleural cavity-white foam/froth in left lung, pink in right lung, both lungs had mild lung worm infestations
37. pancreas partially fibrotic, no *Campulla* seen

40 **Findings of Human Interaction:** ☒YES ☐NO ☐CBD (Exam Type: external__ internal___ both X__)
(transfer to Level A Datasheet)

41 Type of HI: (provide details in comments)

☒Entanglement (gear X debris__ CBD__)	☐Gunshot ☐CBD/Other_____
☐Hooking (recreational__ commercial__ CBD__)	☐Vessel trauma (sharp__ blunt__ both__)
☐Ingestion (gear__ debris__ CBD__)	☐Harassment

42 **Stranding Event History/Circumstances:**

This animal stranded in an area where striped bass are being commercially fished just offshore. The fishery uses monofilament gill net and is the only active fishery reported in the area according to state fisheries officers. This *Tursiops* is one of 5 with similar monofilament marks encountered within 2 weeks and all animals have been in good nutritional condition with evidence of recent foraging.

43 **INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION:** If you circled YES above (line 40) evaluate the external exam, necropsy, carcass condition and circumstances surrounding the stranding event to answer the question below. *Remember to be conservative in your subjective evaluation.*
What is the likelihood that the finding of human interaction (line 40) contributed to the stranding event?

0: Uncertain (CBD) 1: Improbable 2: Suspect (3:Probable)

44 **Justification:**

This was a robust animal with evidence of recent foraging, no gross indication of significant underlying disease, and multiple injuries consistent with entanglement.

Final human interaction evaluation requires additional data from level B and C analyses as well as review by a veterinary pathologist.

IFAW & VAQS Data Sheet (finalized 5/2012)

Internal examination findings in this case include:

- Skeleton examined - no broken bones
- Stomach examined - intact fish in fore-stomach, parasites in main stomach, feces in intestine
- Lungs examined - bloody fluid in pleural cavity, left lung had white froth, right had pink froth and appeared hemorrhagic
- No evidence of sub-dermal bruising or blunt trauma
- No other pathology observed - mild lung worm, 30% fibrosis in pancreas, bloody fluid in abdominal cavity

COMMENTS - You must record the details of your observations in this section. Provide comments for each item for which you checked YES or CBD. When describing lesions, include measurements (*e.g.* length, width, depth, and distance between lesions), location (*e.g.* measurement from nearest landmark – 20cm caudal of the right flipper), color, shape, and texture. Note the characteristics of the edges (*e.g.* jagged, straight, or rounded) and the direction of linear lesions (*e.g.* wraps from leading edge of dorsal fin to trailing edge on left side). Number each set of comments using the corresponding line number for that row on the data sheet. Use extra pages if needed and be sure to note the animal's field number in the upper right margin. If this information is provided in the necropsy report or other data sheet, reference that material here. Note that in this case study, details for each YES and CBD are recorded.

FINDINGS OF HUMAN INTERACTION - Review your exam notes, and circle YES if you observed any signs of human interaction on the animal. Circle NO, if you thoroughly examined the animal and did not find any signs of human interaction. Circle CBD if: (1) you did not examine the animal thoroughly, (2) decomposition or scavenger damage hampered the exam, or (3) you are unsure whether marks on the animal were caused by human interaction. This is an objective analysis. It does not take into account the animal's physical condition, the timing of the human interaction with respect to the stranding, or the circumstances surrounding the stranding. TRANSFER THIS INFORMATION TO THE SIGNS OF HUMAN INTERACTION SECTION ON THE LEVEL A DATA SHEET. This dolphin had multiple linear lesions consistent with monofilament net on most appendages. Signs of human interaction = YES. Also check the correct details in the parenthetical notes.

TYPE OF HI - If you circled YES for Findings of HI, check the appropriate box for the type of HI observed. Also check the correct details in the parenthetical notes.

STRANDING EVENT HISTORY/CIRCUMSTANCES - Provide any information about the stranding event or circumstances surrounding the event that would be helpful in determining the HI diagnosis (*i.e.* fishing, drilling, oil spill, unusual mortality events, previous sightings of animal, unusual behavior prior to stranding, or other activities, *etc*.). Note any objective details provided by the initial reporter. These may be answers to questions you have asked (*i.e.* was there any blood in the water next to the animal? What did it look or smell like when you first observed it? How was the animal positioned such as belly up, on its side, *etc*.?).

INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION - This section should be completed if you

circled YES under Findings of Human Interaction Observed (#39). It should be completed after filling out the entire data sheet. This section is subjective and takes into account the animal's physical condition, necropsy findings, the timing of the human interaction with respect to the stranding, and the circumstances surrounding the stranding. Most importantly, it takes into account the evaluator's level of experience. If you have not conducted many evaluations or are not familiar with the region or lesions observed, you may be unable to make an accurate final evaluation. In this case study, necropsy revealed no obvious pathology. The animal had fed recently and, based on its robust body condition, had been feeding consistently prior to stranding, thus the evaluation is 3 (probable).

4.2 Debris Entanglement

Debris entanglements often involve live, free swimming animals that may be hard to recognize and capture despite obvious injury. Generally speaking, debris entanglement affects pinnipeds at a greater rate than cetaceans, but both are known to have become entangled in debris. Due to their inquisitive nature, young animals will often investigate objects in the water, which can lead to entanglement, usually around the head/neck. Documentation of these cases is important and may lead to information about potentially harmful objects found in the marine ecosystem.

Definition

Debris: In the context of marine mammals and human interactions, debris refers to any non-fishery related items found in the water column (or on shore in the case of pinnipeds). Debris

*Gray seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) entangled in an aerobie ™ frisbee (above; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

includes garbage, balloons, items washed into the water from vessels and run-off, and other sources. Almost any debris long enough to wrap around a mouth or flipper or with an opening large enough for an animal to insert its head poses a risk of entanglement.

Examples of debris entanglement

The most common and obvious form of evidence is the visible object in which the animal is entangled. In most cases, the debris remains on the animal for a long period of time, or even permanently, resulting in constrictive injuries as the animal moves and grows. Constrictions from entanglements can lead to abrasions, deep lacerations, infection, and death. Entanglements that involve the mouth and/or flippers can restrict feeding and locomotion and result in emaciation.

*California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*) with plastic debris around neck (left; © The Marine Mammal Center in Sausilito).*

*Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), especially juveniles, are curious and interact with objects in their environments. One juvenile in Sarasota, FL became entangled in a Speedo™ bathing suit (above). The entanglement was constricting and the animal was losing weight (above left). The dolphin was captured, disentangled, and released (© Chicago Zoological Society and Sarasota Dolphin Project).*

*Elephant seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) with plastic packing band embedded in neck (left; © The Marine Mammal Center in Sausilito).*

4.3 Debris/Gear Ingestion

Debris and gear ingestion are two forms of HI that usually exhibit no obvious external marks. Animals that have ingested indigestible foreign matter may be emaciated, but that is not always the case. Small amounts of debris may not affect normal feeding and digestion. However, some species seem more prone to debris ingestion. These include deep diving sperm whales and beaked whales. Some animals ingest foreign matter as a common, natural occurrence. Juvenile ice seals (harp and hooded) that strand in the northeast U.S. frequently ingest rocks and sand. These animals can die from the resulting gut impaction as a consequence of this potentially natural behavior (*i.e.* not human interaction). It is important to understand that you cannot rule out debris/gear ingestion unless you carefully examine the GI tract of an animal. Debris/gear ingestion is one of the few forms of HI that is nearly as detectable in a Condition Code 4 animal as it is in a fresh animal.

Definitions

The definitions of **Debris** and **Gear** remain the same as those described previously.

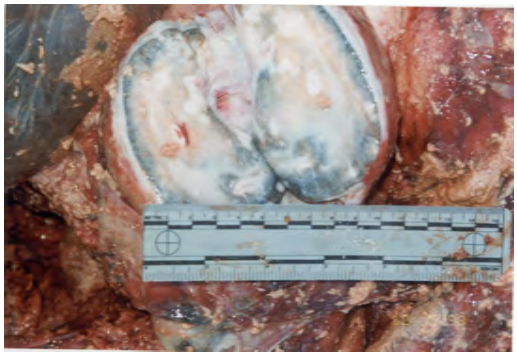
Ingestion: When an animal eats or swallows debris or gear, the result is HI classified as debris/gear ingestion. Ingested items may be found anywhere in the gastrointestinal tract: esophagus, stomach (all chambers), intestines, or colon.

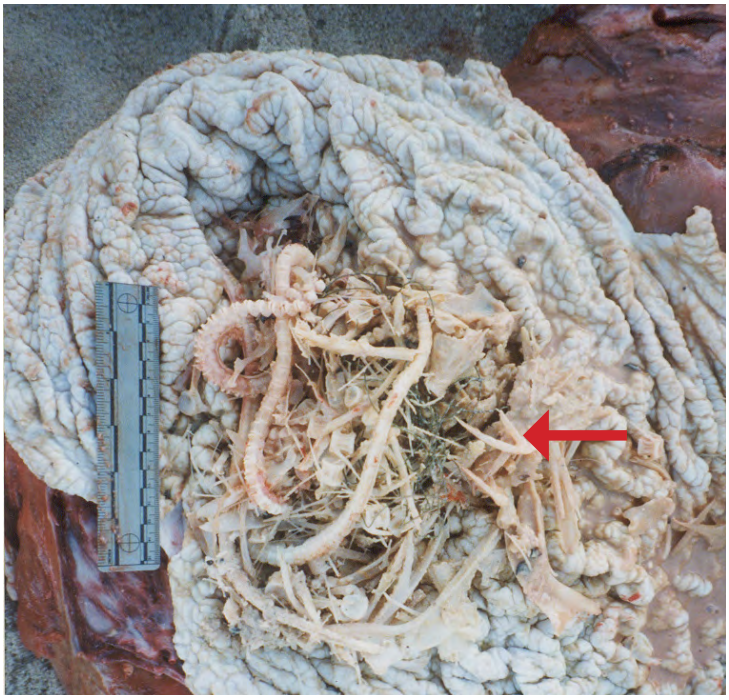
Examples of debris/gear ingestion

As previously stated, there are often no external signs of debris/gear ingestion. In some cases, individual animals may become emaciated if the debris has caused a blockage or other complication in the GI tract. However, in most cases, the only evidence of HI is the debris or gear itself. In the case of live animals in a stranding or rehabilitation situation, the debris may pass through the GI system. However, the majority of the debris or gear ingestion cases will not be found until necropsy and examination of GI contents. All debris, gear, and associated lesions should be photographed (be sure to include labels and scale), tagged, and archived as evidence of the HI. It can be very useful to photograph the debris *in situ*, then remove it, place it on a board with scale and labels and photograph again.

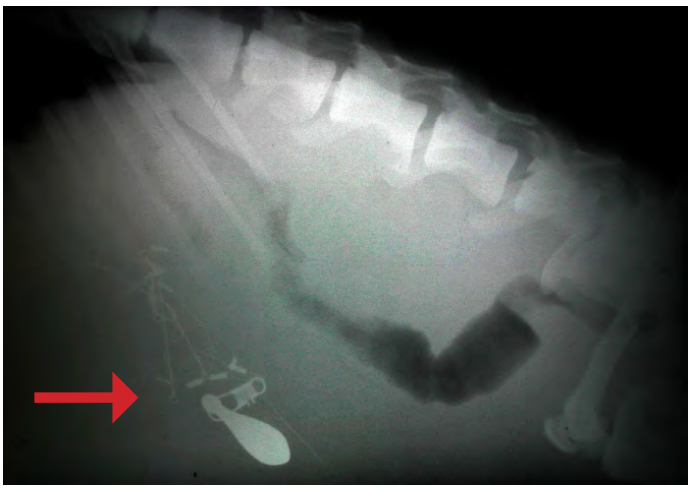
*Clear plastic, rock, and feathers from a harp seal (*Pagophilus groenlandica*) stomach (right; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

*Gillnet found in main stomach of a long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*). The net was associated with an abscess (below left) in the stomach (below right; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*





*Radiograph of a harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) showing a recreational bottom fishing rig including 2 hooks and a lead sinker in the GI tract (right, © Virginia Aquarium).*



*Potato chip bag from the stomach of a pygmy sperm whale (*Kogia breviceps*; left). Parts of the bag were lodged in the sphincter between the main and pyloric stomachs, preventing food from passing through the gut (© Virginia Aquarium).*

Evaluating Debris/Gear Ingestion Cases

The harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*; below) stranded alive and was later euthanized. Upon necropsy, plastic debris was discovered in the forestomach (below; © UNC Wilimington).

FINDINGS OF HI = YES

Reaching a final evaluation can be problematic in debris and gear ingestion cases, especially when the amount of foreign substance is small. In this case, the harbor porpoise stranded alive, but emaciated. After hours in rehabilitation, it began exhaling worms and froth from the blowhole. It was euthanized and necropsied. Plastic debris was found in the stomach, but was not blocking sphincters. Was plastic ingestion a cause of or a symptom of illness? It was unclear whether the animal was already emaciated and compromised when it ingested the plastic (much like ice seals do with sand and rocks in New England) or whether it ingested the plastic and was then compromised because of the ingestion. The Final Evaluation reflects this uncertainty with a score of 2 (Suspect).

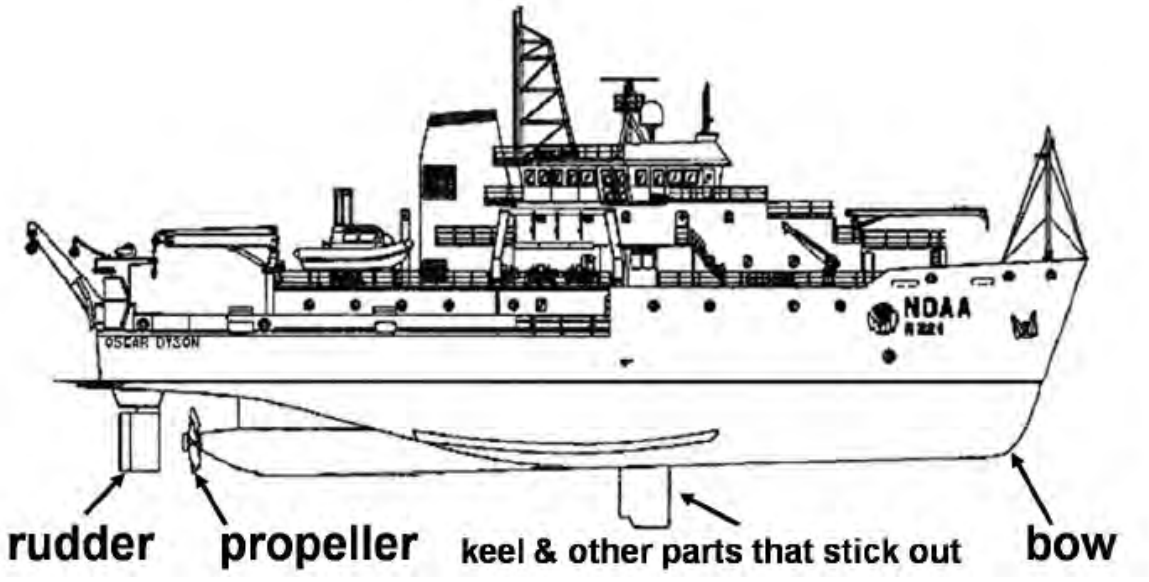
INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION = 2 (SUSPECT)

4.4 Vessel Interactions

Vessel interactions can cause various forms of injury: sharp, intermediate, blunt, and a combination of these three. Sharp parts of vessels (often propellers) can cause sharp or penetrating trauma that is obvious upon external examination (in the form of characteristic wound patterns). The bow, keel, and other parts of vessels can cause blunt trauma that leads to internal injuries (sub-dermal hemorrhage, edema, internal organ rupture, internal hemorrhage and broken bones), often without any obvious external signs. For example, the hulls of small vessels can cause blunt trauma damage, especially in shallow water where an animal may be pinned against the substrate by the hull. Some blunt impacts, however, may leave external lesions.

Vessels inflict very different wounds depending on the vessel size, the part of the vessel that is involved (keel, propeller, bow, *etc*.; below), what part of the animal is involved, and its posture in the water prior to impact. It is imperative that a thorough internal exam accompany a finding of vessel interaction to determine whether the strike occurred before death.

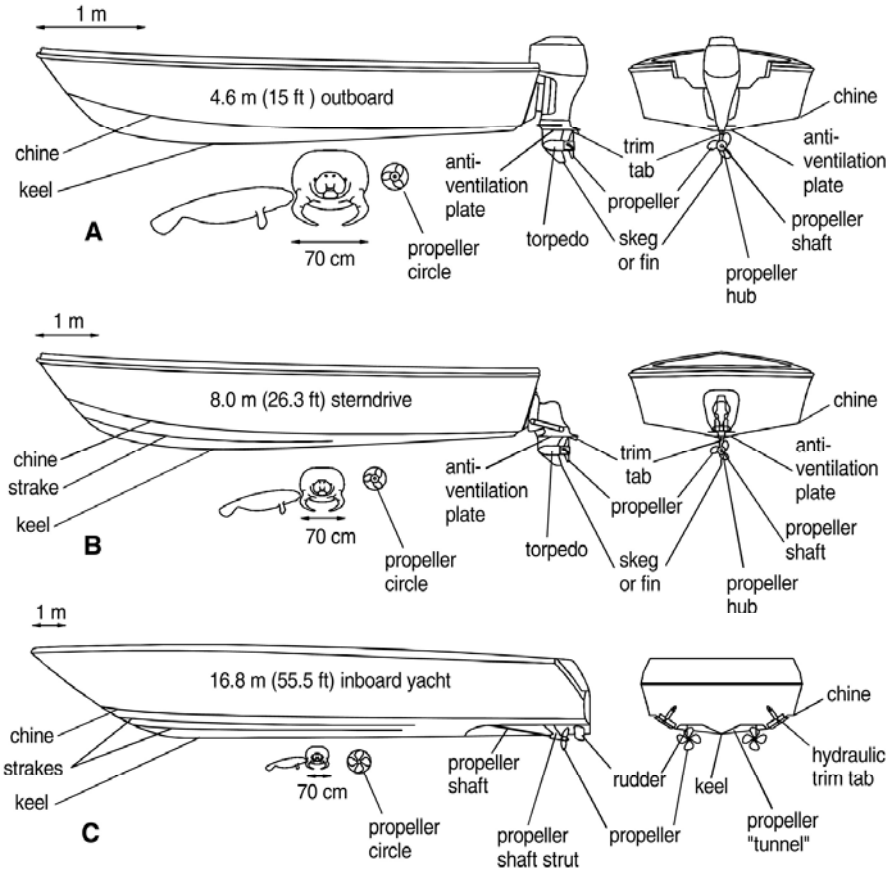
Propellers are available in different sizes, have differing numbers of blades, varying pitch (angle of the blades), and direction of rotation. All of these variables affect the characteristics of the wounds resulting from propeller strikes. Vessels can have a single propeller or two propellers separated by varying distances. Two propellers can be side by side (*e.g.* twin engines on a small vessel), or mounted on the same axis (shaft) rotating in opposite directions. The latter configuration causes very unusual diamond or 'X' shaped lesions (see first Figure in section 4.4.1 images F and G). All of these factors combined with the varying size, shape, and movement of marine mammals makes diagnosis of propeller trauma challenging. Manatees are the marine mammal poster children for propeller damage and several excellent publications describe and analyze propeller trauma in manatees (Lightsey *et al*. 2006; Rommel *et. al*. 2007). The methods and measurements discussed in these publications are equally relevant to other marine mammals. By carefully documenting a suspected vessel trauma case, you may be able to discern antemortem or premortem trauma from postmortem trauma and to infer some characteristics about the vessel and the interaction. The examination and measurements detailed below are not likely to allow you to identify what specific vessel interacted with an animal, but they may allow you to determine the type or size of vessel or to rule out a specific vessel that is suspected of the interaction.



Definitions

Definitions of **Blunt force trauma** (blunt trauma) and **Sharp force trauma** (sharp trauma) remain the same as defined in the introductory section "Recognizing Human Interactions" under "Types of wounds/lesions observed."

In relation to vessel interactions, propeller wounds (or prop strikes) are the most common type of sharp trauma observed, but other vessel and engine parts such as skegs (see image below) can cause sharp trauma as well. Injuries from propellers are most similar to chop wounds (DiMaio and Dana 2007).



Smaller vessels (watercraft) exhibit a variety of hull, engine, and propeller configurations and sizes. This image from Rommel et al. 2007 illustrates several hull/engine configurations, highlighting parts that interact with manatees (left; © S. Rommel).

Propeller cut versus **propeller wound pattern**: Each lesion suspected to be involved with vessel interaction involving a propeller should be examined individually as 'propeller cuts' and collectively as a 'propeller wound pattern'. Measurements from each can add to your knowledge of the propeller(s) and, thus, the vessel type involved in the interaction. If there is a sequence of parallel lesions, such as those made by a single propeller, the examiner should number each lesion consecutively beginning at the cranial-most lesion. The numerical sequence in which the cuts are labeled represents the order in which they were measured, not the order in which the wounds occurred. In order to learn as much as possible about the vessel interaction, the following data should be collected on each propeller cut (Figure from Rommel *et al. 2007*): cut length, cut depth, wound axis, wound length, cut distance and propeller rotation (see definitions below).

Cut length: Using calipers (preferable), measure the straight length of each complete cut where both entry and exit points are visible (cuts that trail off a dorsal fin, keel, flipper, or fluke are not complete cuts). This straight measurement is most representative of the device that caused the wound. **The length of the longest cut provides a minimum estimate of the propeller diameter and is the best means of estimating propeller size**.

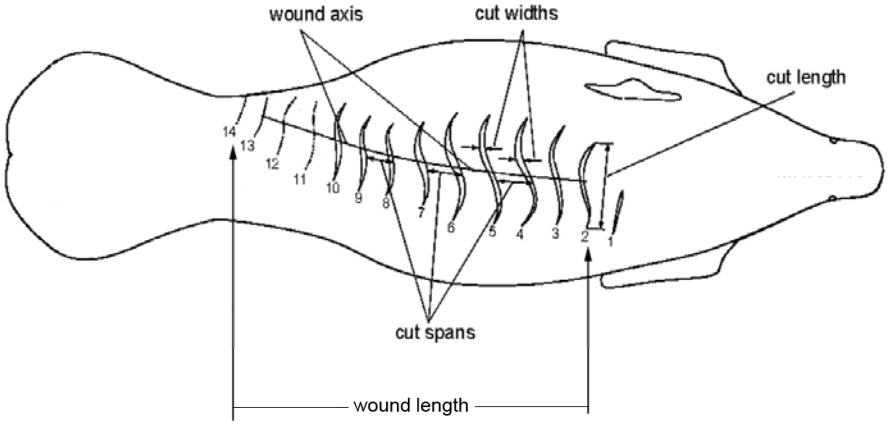
Cut depth: Cut depth is the maximum depth of a cut. This measurement provides an estimate of propeller radius and is useful when there are no cut lengths that can be measured on a carcass (*i.e*. there are no full cuts with both an entry and exit wound or beginning and end, such as when props cut through dorsal fins or flukes). A cut depth measurement is not possible when the injury penetrates into the body cavity or through an extremity. **In general, the deeper a propeller cuts in relation to its radius, the more distortion from a straight line you will see.** As seen in the illustration below, a shallow cut in relation to propeller blade radius (cuts number 13 & 14 image below) will leave a fairly straight cut, deeper cuts tend to be distorted into 'Z' or 'S' shapes (cut number 3 & 4 image below; adapted with permission from authors © S. Rommel).

Propeller wound pattern: The series of lesions caused by a propeller collectively forms the propeller wound pattern, which has dimensions and characteristics that can also be measured (refer to figure below; © S. Rommel):

Wound axis: If there are two or more propeller cuts, a wound axis may be determined. **The wound axis is a line passing through roughly the center of each cut in the series and is an estimate of the travel path of the vessel and its propeller**. If a substantial percentage of the length of the propeller blade is involved, then the entry point of each cut may have different characteristics from the exit point.

Wound length: The wound length is the length of the wound axis from the middle of the first to the middle of the last cut in the wound pattern.

Cut distance (or '**Cut span**'): Cut distance or cut span is the distance along the wound axis, between successive cuts in a single pattern and is **measured from leading edge to leading edge or from trailing edge to trailing edge**. The accuracy of these measurements is affected by wound contraction in antemortem injuries and degraded by postmortem distortion of the carcass (bloating and/or off-gassing). In general, the distance between cuts tells you about the pitch of the propeller. The closer the cuts, the greater the pitch of the propeller blades. Smaller and faster vessels usually have more angled (higher pitch) propeller blades. Larger, slower vessels and those designed for towing tend to have lower pitch propellers.



Propeller rotation (or '**Handedness**'): The propeller rotation refers to the direction a propeller rotates around its shaft when in forward gear. **If viewed from behind a vessel, right-handed propellers turn clockwise and leave a pattern of cuts slanted to the right along the wound axis. In contrast, left-handed propellers turn counter-clockwise and leave a pattern of cuts slanted to the left along the wound axis (**Figure from Rommel *et al. 2007*, below). In the US, most single propeller vessels have a right-handed propeller. If you see a single set of cuts from a left-handed propeller on an animal, the vessel was most likely a twin prop vessel (with two propellers side by side each turning in a different direction) and only the left-hand prop struck the animal.

4.4.1 Sharp Force Trauma

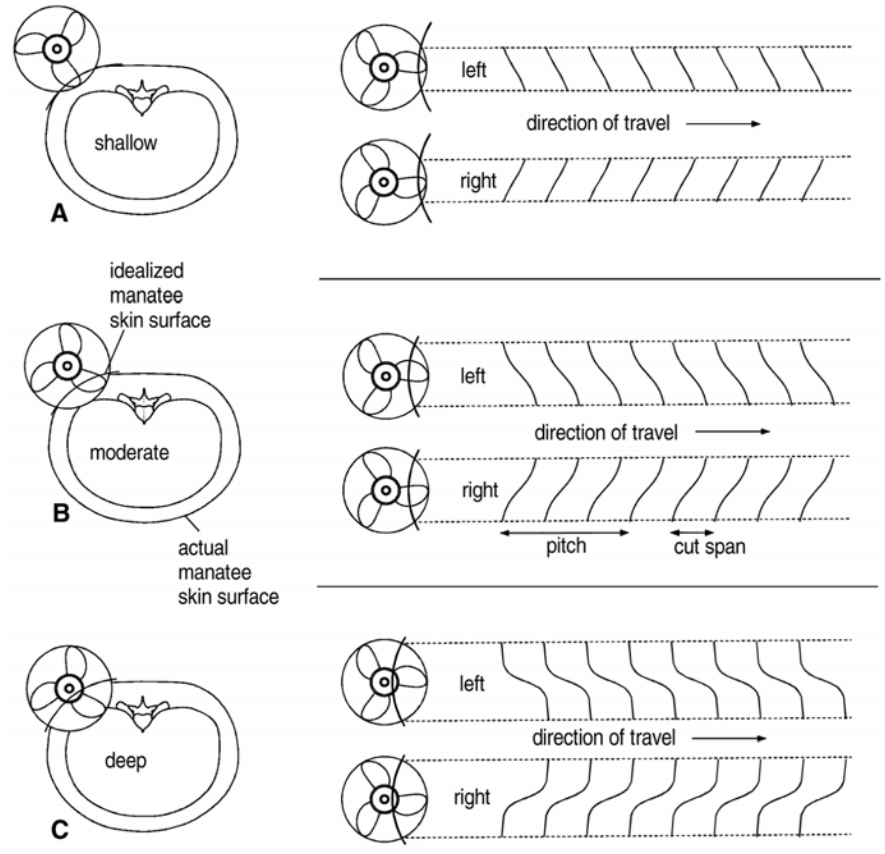
Propellers usually leave deep, roughly parallel wounds. Large propellers may bisect an animal.

Sharp force trauma from vessel interactions can be recognized by some common characteristics:

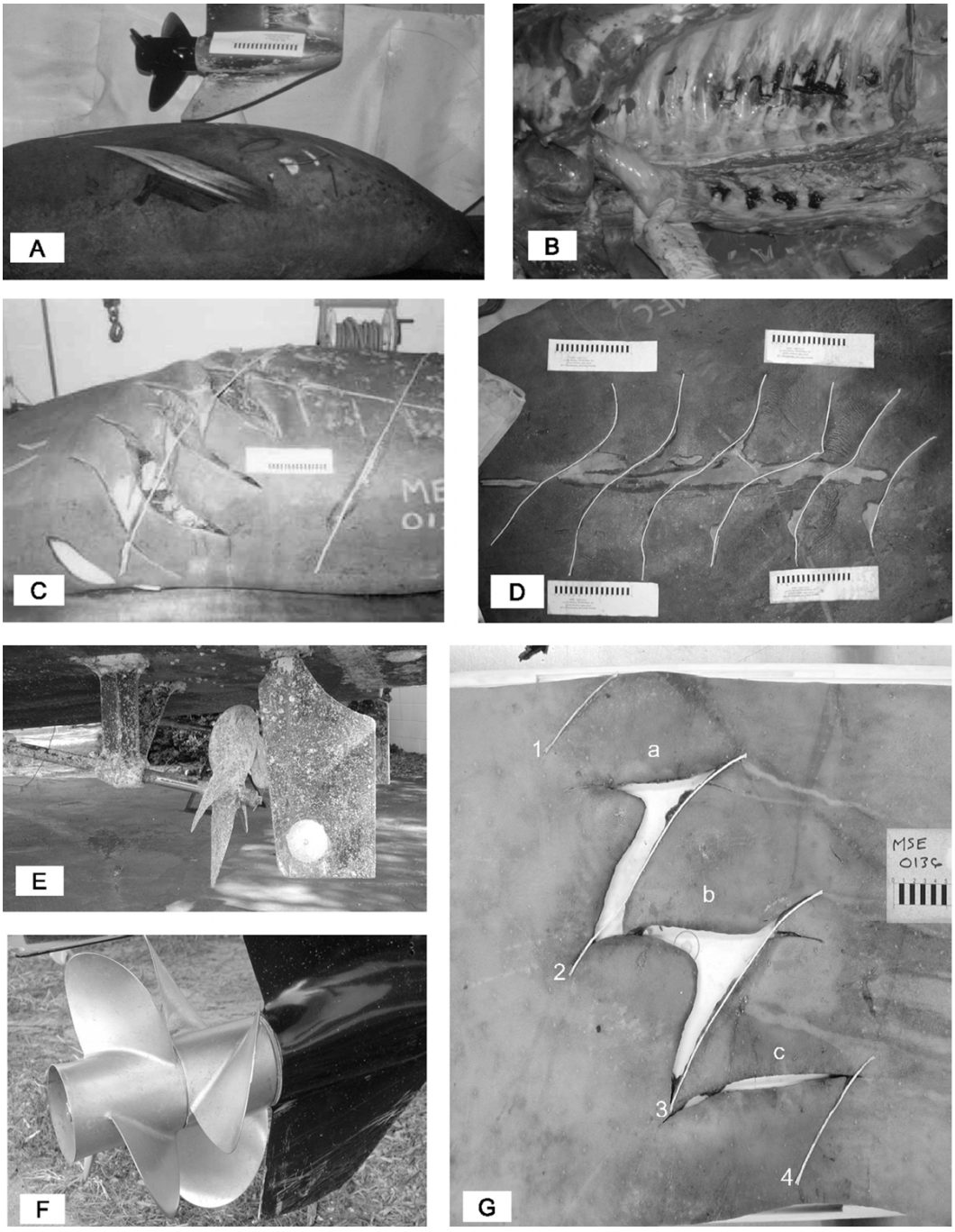
- Usually more than one lesion/cut
- Wound pattern often includes a series of lesions that are roughly parallel
- Individual propeller cuts have greater depth in the middle of the wound than at the edges
- Propeller cuts often form a corkscrew pattern
- Clean (not ragged) amputation of a fluke, flipper, or fin

When documenting sharp trauma from a propeller, it is important to gather as much data as possible about the wounds. These details may be useful in determining what part of a vessel and what type of vessel may have caused the wound(s). The following tips will guide the examiner in recording and documenting these events:

- Number the lesions starting at the head and move caudally
- Note the cut length and cut depth of each lesion
- Record the cut distance or span between each cut from the leading or trailing edges
- Determine the wound axis and wound length (remember the wound pattern is the series of cuts)



- Note the tissues affected (blubber & muscle, ribs, organs, *etc.*) and the amount of tissue staining consistent with hemorrhage (Note: staining or discoloration of tissues can have many causes, not all of which are related to trauma, including most commonly post mortem lividity.)



Examples of watercraft injuries in manatees and the propulsion system that was the most likely cause of the wounds (Rommel et al. 2007): (A) Skeg wound from an outboard motor (similar to the one suspended above the carcass; (B) Internal injuries from wound A; (C) Separate propeller and rudder wounds from a twin propeller inboard engine-left propeller caused the wounds; (D) Propeller and rudder wounds from a single propeller inboard engine and in-line rudder; (E) Propulsion system that caused wounds in image D; (F) Counter-rotating propellers on a single shaft; (G) Wounds caused by two counter-rotating propellers pictured in image F (used with permission from authors; © S. Rommel).

Evaluating Sharp Trauma Vessel Interaction Cases

This gray seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) has four parallel wounds penetrating deep to the bone on the caudal dorsum, to the right of the dorsal midline.

FINDINGS OF HI = YES

This dead gray seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) was reported to the stranding network on 9/8/04 as a seal hit by a boat with propeller wounds evident. The carcass was collected by the town Department of Natural Resources and transported to a landfill, where the carcass was examined on the same day. A partial internal exam (limited due to state of decomposition and logistical considerations) revealed sub-dermal staining consistent with hemorrhage in association with the wounds. An incomplete dissection revealed one cleanly cut rib associated with the wounds. Evidence of HI (vessel strike-sharp trauma) was present on the animal and observed muscle staining indicated that the propeller strike occurred before death and was the apparent cause of the stranding. Signs of human interaction=YES. Histopathology findings in conjunction with the details from the individuals reporting the event supported a finding of 3 (Probable) that the HI caused this stranding.

INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION = 3 (PROBABLE)

Additional information from this vessel interaction case:

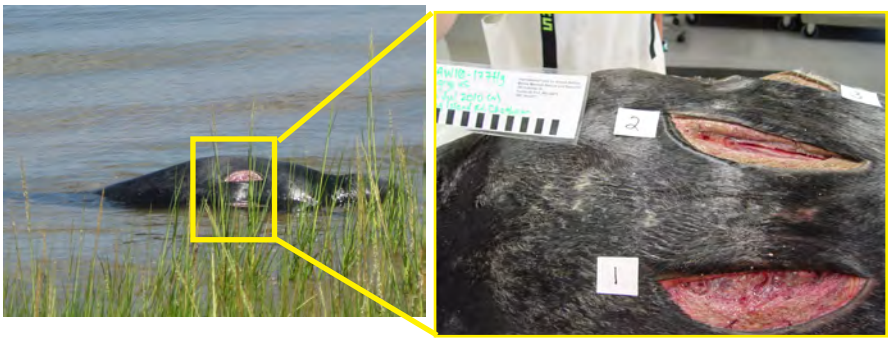
- *The wounds on the seal were straight (instead of 'S' or 'Z' shaped) indicating that the propeller in question did not penetrate deeply compared to its diameter. This makes any estimation of the propeller size using the cut length or depth an underestimate.*

- *The cut surface of the cranial side of each of the four lesions is curled under while the caudal side is completely exposed as a 'C' shape indicating the angle at which the propeller hit the animal. This suggests that the vessel was travelling from the animal's head toward its tail (in the opposite direction of the seal).*

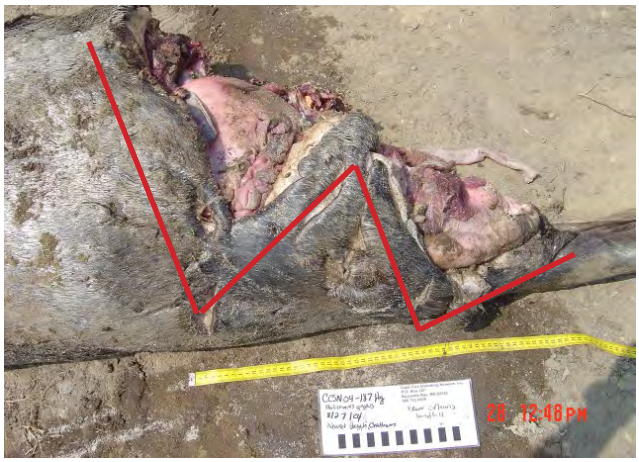
Examples of sharp trauma caused by vessel interaction

*Large vessels with large propellers tend to create straight line cuts that are far apart like the 3 cuts on this humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), noted when first sighted floating in Chesapeake Bay (left) and (below) after it washed ashore (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*Dorsal propeller wound pattern on a live stranded Gervais' beaked whale (*Mesoplodon europaeus*). This animal was observed alive in the surf. The injury obviously occurred premortem, but documentation is still important (above left). Of the four cuts, the shallowest was closest to the head and did not penetrate the blubber. The other three CUT WOUNDS penetrated through the blubber and into the epaxial muscle (above right). Examining the underside of the wounds is the best way to look for premortem tissue staining due to hemorrhage, as seen here in the blubber and muscle (above right; © Virginia Aquarium).*



*Sequential cut wounds in a live gray seal (*Haichoerus grypus*), with a close up at necropsy (left, © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*



*This gray seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) had at least two distinct propeller cut wounds that were partially obscured by shark predation/scavenging. The clean, straight line of the cranial-most wound extended from the left side across the back (top left) and the second cut wound appears to have amputated the left rear flipper (above right). The smaller, irregular wounds (which can mimic propeller wounds) on the ventrum (bottom left) are from the teeth of a large shark, most likely a great white (all images © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

Examples of unusual sharp trauma caused by vessel interaction

Since 2009, an increasing number of severely damaged grey (Halichoerus grypus) *and harbor seal* (Phoca vitulina) *carcasses have been reported on the east coast of the UK (Bexton, et.al. 2012). Similar, but not identical, pathology has been observed in a number of harbour porpoise stranding in both the UK and other countries bordering the North Sea. The distinctive spiral appearance of the injuries has led to them being referred to as "corkscrew" wounds. (Andrew Brownlow pers. comm. 2012, June, SAC Wildlife Unit, Inverness, UK, IV2 4JZ). Work is underway to describe the propulsion system and mechanisms most likely to cause these lesions (Andrew Brownlow pers. comm. 2012, June, SAC Wildlife Unit, Inverness, UK, IV2 4JZ; all images this page © SAC Wildlife Unit).*

In seals, the distinctive lesion pattern comprises a single continuous, smooth-edged oblique laceration starting at the head and spiralling around the body. The wound edge is characteristically cleanly cut and the wound makes between one and three revolutions around the trunk.

In cetaceans, the trauma pattern broadly consists of two perpendicular lacerations beginning at the head and spiralling around the body. Wound margins also tend to be oblique and there is evidence of regular feathering to some wound margins, suggesting both smooth and serrated edges caused the trauma.

*The slow swimming, surface/sub-surface dwelling manatees (*Trichechus manatus*) are frequently struck by vessels. Many animals survive one or more vessel strikes and bear the scars of those interactions (right; © Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission).*

This is another example of a vessel strike on a Florida manatee (above). Note the serial nature of the cut wounds characteristic of a propeller strike. There are nine main cuts in the wound pattern that vary in depth into the underlying tissue. Also note the perpendicular lesion at the ventral edge, likely caused by the rudder or skeg of the engine (© Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission).

Evaluating a Decomposed Sharp Trauma Case

This was a lone, sociable bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) that had been observed begging from boats. When the carcass was discovered, it was a code 4 (severely decomposed) with obvious propeller damage.

FINDINGS OF HI = YES

The size and orientation (corkscrewed around the body) of the lesions suggest an interaction with a fairly large vessel and that the propeller cut deeply into the animal compared to its diameter.

Despite suspicion that the dolphin was struck while it was alive, decomposition prevented us from determining if any tissue staining consistent with hemorrhage was present.

INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION = 0 (UNCERTAIN, CBD)

This dolphin had been observed alone in a river for over 6 months. It was reported to be begging from boats and several calls from the public suggested that it was feeding on discarded bait from crabbers. Although the reported behavior of the animal indicates that it would have been susceptible to vessel strike because of its inclination to approach boats, we were unable to determine the likelihood that the HI contributed to the stranding due to decomposition.

4.4.2 Blunt Force Trauma

Blunt trauma from vessel interaction occurs when a blunt object strikes a victim with enough force to cause internal damage, often with only subtle external damage. When a marine mammal interacts with the hull or other blunt portion of a vessel, the interaction often results in fatal blunt trauma. The presence of unusual lumps, bumps, dents, or misshapen areas on a carcass can be an indication of blunt trauma. Other indications include: blood in the eyes, mouth, and nares (or blowhole). External signs of blunt trauma are not always evident, but, when present, they may include:

- Abnormal appearance of body shape (lumpy or misshapen profile)
- Swelling(s)
- Abrasions, lacerations, and/or discoloration/bruising

Internal evidence of blunt trauma is always present and serves as the primary diagnostic indicator. Internal evidence can include:

- Subdermal tissue staining which is consistent with hemorrhage and bruising (*e.g.* pink-tinged blubber or deep maroon/purple muscle tissue with a gelatinous texture)
- Edematous tissue
- Broken bones
- Organ damage

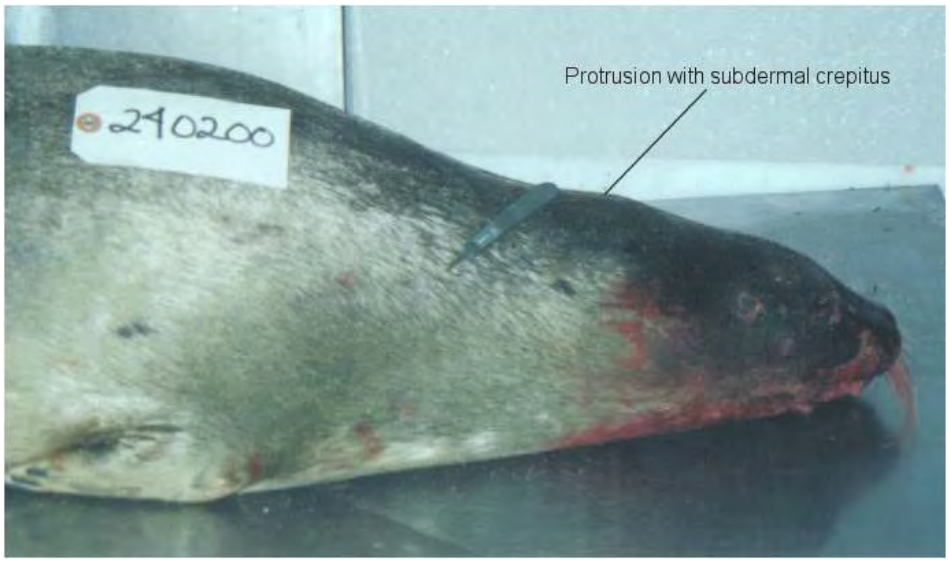
In almost all cases, blunt trauma is difficult to diagnose without a necropsy. In large cetacean carcasses, blunt trauma may result in one area decomposing faster than others internally. Because large whale carcasses do not cool down as readily as smaller animals, areas of blubber and/or muscle affected by trauma may appear more decomposed (often liquefied) than adjacent muscle and tissue. In fresh carcasses, organs affected by trauma may appear fractured or split. Broken bones, especially ribs, can also cause organ damage. In these cases, look for evidence of bleeding/hemorrhage associated with fractures and organ damage.

Examples of blunt trauma caused by vessel interaction

*Fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) carcass in Virginia with a lesion later found to be associated with blunt trauma. The lesion was located on the left lumbar area just cranial to the dorsal fin (left). A close-up examination of the lesion reveals an ABRASION with missing skin and an area that is beginning to off-gas (below). When the blubber was removed from the side of the carcass, muscle below the lesion was very dark red and liquefied, while muscle adjacent to the area was lighter in color and a more normal texture. The transverse processes of the associated lumbar vertebrae were broken in this area. This hyper-decomposed area is supportive of pre- or antemortem trauma (below; all images © Virginia Aquarium).*

*Sometimes dead whales are found floating in inland harbors or ports, which are unlikely places to find live whales. These cases usually represent whales that have been struck by a ship and have been carried into port on the ship's bow. Lesions like the large 'dent' in the fin whale (*Baleanoptera physalus*) above are usually located about 1/3 of the body length from the tip of the rostrum. Shippers argue that whales are usually dead before they are hit by ships, but when these cases are examined, evidence most often supports ante- or premortem interaction (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*This harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) was recovered from a roadway in New York where a seal/vehicle interaction obviously occurred (left). Note the misshapen appearance of the head and neck (above left) and the bulging right eye (above right). Cases such as this, in which the cause of the trauma is obvious, provide an opportunity to document a known cause of HI. Through comparison, these cases help other responders in the field who may not have a 'crime scene' that provides clues to the cause of the trauma (© Riverhead Foundation, Riverhead, NY).*



Carcass of a seal rehabilitated and released by the Riverhead Foundation in Riverhead, New York and later found dead. Note the slight swelling on the dorsal surface of the neck and the bloody fur around the head (right). There was no obvious cut or penetrating wound on the animal. When the seal was examined internally, initial incisions revealed bloody blubber at the site of the swelling (below). While the trauma did not result in broken skin, the internal damage to the head and skull was massive, as shown here with the flesh reflected back to reveal a severe skull fracture and hemorrhage (below). The blunt trauma and case history suggest that this was likely the result of a vessel interaction. The seal was possibly hit by the hull of a vessel resulting in the traumatic head injury (© Riverhead Foundation, Riverhead, NY).

Example of blunt trauma NOT caused by vessel interaction

*Not all cases of blunt trauma are the result of human interaction. This bottlenose dolphin calf (*Tursiops truncatus*) appeared normal with the exception of tooth rakes and a small dent on the left side of the head (above). When the blubber was removed (left), discrete areas of tissue staining were obvious. Although this is considered blunt trauma, it was not due to human interaction. This was a case of infanticide where adult* Tursiops *inflicted the wounds seen on the calf (Dunn et al. 2002). Attacks and other natural events (such as birth) can result in blunt trauma, so collect data objectively and then analyze all findings (© Virginia Aquarium).*

Case Study #2 – Vessel strike with blunt force trauma

This sei whale (*Baleanoptera borealis*) in Virginia showed lesions on the right flank (below).

CASE HISTORY:
This sei whale (VMSM20031006) was reported floating in Norfolk harbor on 19 Feb 2003 by the US Coast Guard and was towed to a military beach for necropsy. The necropsy was completed on 20 Feb 2003.

EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION
Condition Code: 3
Preservation: fresh
Body Condition: not emaciated
Integument: normal
% skin missing: <10%

The left side of the whale showed no external lesions (right).

There were circular abrasions and a linear lesion on the right dorso-lateral surface above the pectoral flipper (right).

The whale was in fairly good condition with minimal bloating; it was marked as moderately decomposed (code 3). It was fresh when examined and was not emaciated. With the exception of the noted abrasions, the skin was intact and normal.

The location of the linear laceration and the abraded areas on either side of the linear mark indicate that the whale was most likely struck and then pinned against, and wrapped around, the bow (bulb) of a large ship. Although an exact vessel was not identified, the whale probably floated to the surface when the ship slowed or reversed to dock. An external examination alone allows us to score the carcass as YES for Signs of HI. However, without an internal exam, we cannot determine whether the whale was alive at the time it was hit.

WHOLE BODY EXAM:
The whole body exam, which can be challenging with large whales, revealed only the marks shown in the first photograph. The whale had a laceration perpendicular to the body axis from the dorsal midline extending ventral to the right flipper; the right flipper had no obvious injury. On either side of the laceration, there were large areas where the skin was abraded. The ventral and left sides had no obvious lesions. The initial exam centered on the tissue proximal to the linear lesion and abrasions.

DETAILED EXAM OF ANATOMICAL AREAS:
Following the data sheet, each anatomical area was examined. Given the good skin condition, the team was able to determine that, other than the linear laceration and rounded abrasions noted above, there were no other signs of HI present on the carcass.

Making cuts to remove blubber and examine underlying tissue (left).

We began the internal exam by removing the blubber from the right side of the carcass. Although there was an obvious external abrasion and laceration to the right thorax, internal exam showed no subdermal tissue staining consistent with hemorrhage beneath the wounds (below). There was no underlying tissue reaction to indicate that the whale was alive when hit. We continued the exam by stripping the blubber on the left side of the carcass.

On the left side of the carcass, we found bruising and hemorrhage associated with underlying rib fractures proximal to the left flipper (above left). Two ribs were fractured level with the mid-flipper on the left side (above right). There was obvious discoloration in the blubber and muscle consistent with hemorrhage caudal to the left flipper which was associated with the two broken ribs. The staining was deep into the muscle, including the intercostals (between the ribs). We sampled the stained blubber and muscle for histopathology and collected the ribs at the fractures.

Although the **external** evidence of ship strike was on the right side of the body, the **internal** injuries with associated clotted blood and edema (swelling) were on the left side. Other than these lesions and some intestinal parasites, the animal appeared to be healthy.

Based on gross observations, it appeared that the animal had actually been struck on the left side while alive. The body was probably trapped by the force of the vessel and then shifted or rolled to the right side, likely resting against the bulb on the bow of the ship, resulting in the (postmortem) external abrasions observed.

FINDINGS OF HUMAN INTERACTION OBSERVED = YES

There were obvious signs of abrasion from a large vessel on the right side of the whale. The internal evidence on the left side was consistent with blunt trauma.

INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION = 3 (PROBABLE)

The external lesions on the right side appeared to be postmortem. The left side showed obvious subdermal damage consistent with antemortem/premortem blunt trauma. We felt confident that the whale was hit while it was alive. Histopathology results later confirmed the animal was alive when struck.

JUSTIFICATION: The laceration and abrasions on the right side were consistent with the whale being carried on a ship's bow for a period of time. Histopathology results showed that the internal injury on the left side occurred before death, indicating that the whale was probably struck on the left then shifted or rolled with the forward momentum of the ship so that the right side faced the bow. We think it was likely carried into port this way and then floated off when the ship slowed or changed direction. There were no other obvious pathologies other than a heavy parasite load in the intestines. Histology later confirmed our evaluation.

4.5 Gunshot Wounds

As defined previously, gunshot wounds are the result of ballistic trauma from firearms. These cases should be carefully documented. If you suspect gunshot or a similar injury prior to exam, contact a law enforcement officer and ask if s/he can be present at the exam.

If you discover wounds consistent with gunshot or evidence such as bullets or pellets during the exam:

- Contact law enforcement and your regional coordinator before completing the exam
- If possible collect a radiograph
- Take good pictures and/or video using a label and scale (see Chapter 3)
- Measure wounds (length, width, and depth)
- Use chain of custody for all evidence
- Avoid handling bullets or pellets with metal instruments. Store bullets and pellets in sealed paper envelopes instead of plastic bags or jars.

Definitions

Gunshot wound: wound produced by a firearm. Gunshot wounds will have different characteristics based on the type of firearm, type of ammunition (jacketed and unjacketed bullets, shot/pellets, slugs, *etc*.), angle of the shot, and the distance between the muzzle of the firearm and the body. Gunshot wounds inflicted on marine mammals are most likely to be distant wounds (>1ft) where muzzle imprints and gunshot residue will not be present.

Bullets are fired with firearms such as handguns and rifles. When a bullet passes through a body completely, it usually leaves an exit wound that is substantially larger than the entrance wound. This holds true when the bullet passes through bone. For example, if the skull is penetrated by a bullet, the side of the bone with the entry wound will have a sharp margin and the exit wound will be larger, exhibiting beveling and cracking, but not all bullets will exit.

Shotguns do not fire bullets. They fire a variety of different projectiles including different sizes of round shot/pellets as well as slugs. The entry wound from a shotgun may be quite large if the gun was discharged near the victim and nearly invisible if it was discharged at a distance (>10ft) and if the victim has a pelt. Shotgun wounds made with bird shot will be nearly round and ¾ to 1 inch in diameter at close range (up to 4 feet) and will become increasingly irregular with numerous individual pellet holes up to 10ft. Beyond 10ft, the pellets will spread out and become less detectable.

Radiographs (X-rays) are the best way to confirm gunshot if all or part of a bullet or shot/pellet(s) remain in the body of an animal. Probing tracts with blunt probes can facilitate detection of a bullet and extent of injuries, but samples should be taken first to avoid artefactual damage. Metal detectors can be useful in some cases to detect some types of projectile, but results are inconsistent and require confirmation by radiography or direct visualization.

Trauma characterized by hemorrhage, fracture, or secondary infection of any body part may occur in association with a gunshot injury. However post mortem gunshot wounds can ooze bloody liquid. Different projectiles fragment or pass through to varying degrees. Perforating holes may also be caused by bird beaks, mammalian canine teeth, gaffs, spears, and crossbow arrows. Bird peck holes are commonly identified as gun shot injuries by the public. Holes do not usually have distinguishing features to conclusively identify them as caused by guns.

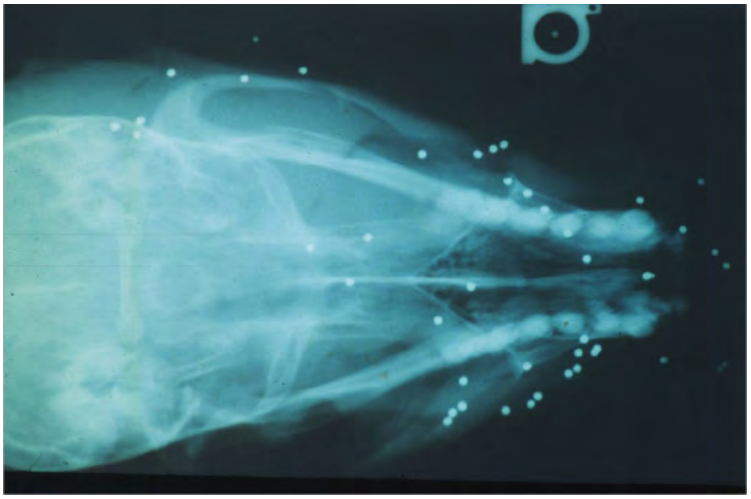
Examples of gunshot wounds

*Harp seals (*Phoca groenlandica*) with close range shotgun wounds to the head (above). Radiographs revealed multiple pellets lodged in the tissue and bone (© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

*Radiograph the harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*) pictured on the left. The seal most likely sustained a shotgun wound from close range as evidenced by the skull damage (above; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

*Close view of a bullet wound in a California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus; *above). Note the fur has been shaved to expose the wound before surgery to remove the bullet (left; © The Marine Mammal Center in Sausilito).*

*California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*) with bullet imbedded in forehead between the eyes. This animal was treated and survived (above; © The Marine Mammal Center in Sausilito).*



*Radiograph of a California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*) with shotgun pellets in the head (left). The image shows the skull intact with numerous pellets imbedded in the tissue, suggesting a distance greater than 10ft from the firearm to the victim (© The Marine Mammal Center in Sausilito).*

4.6 Projectiles and other penetrating interactions

As defined earlier, a penetrating wound occurs when a foreign object punctures or deeply penetrates the body. They can be characterized as one of three types: stab wounds, incised wounds, or chop wounds (DiMaio and Dana 2007). As a reminder:

- **Stab** wounds are deeper than they are long (the wound visible on the external surface is short, but it penetrates deeply into the tissue). Stab wounds are caused by weapons such as gaffs or knives, or projectiles such as arrows or spears.
- **Incised** wounds are clean cuts into the skin and underlying tissue which are longer than they are deep (the opposite of stab wounds). These wounds are caused by sharp-edged objects such as knives or propellers.
- **Chop** wounds are incised wounds that penetrate deep to the bone, leaving a groove or cut in the bone and can be caused by propellers or other instruments.

Examples of other types of penetrating interactions

*California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*) with an arrow penetrating the neck. Considering its emaciated condition, the animal may have survived for some time with the imbedded arrow (right; © The Marine Mammal Center in Sausilito).*

4.7 Harvest/Mutilation

In Alaska and limited areas of the lower 48 US states, hunting of some marine mammal species is legal, mostly by Native Americans. Gunshot and other penetrating wounds as well as knife marks on carcasses in these areas may be the result of legal harvest. Stranding responders should be aware of the legality regarding marine mammal harvest in their area and work with native hunters to recognize the signs of a harvested animal.

Mutilation of a marine mammal is usually a postmortem interaction. Its presence, however, is important to note in light of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In addition, sometimes carcass mutilation is conducted by fishers in an attempt to disentangle animals from their gear, to sink a carcass, or conceal an interaction. Even when mutilation occurs legally, for example when a carcass is mutilated in the process of removal from fishing gear that is permitted to take marine mammals, it is important to document all of the evidence of HI. Although it is not illegal, the mutilation may be the only indication that an animal has interacted with gear and represents important data if documented correctly.

Definitions

Harvest: For the purposes of this manual, harvest is the legal hunting of marine mammals.

Mutilation: the intentional cutting or slicing of an animal or carcass. Mutilation generally involves the use of some type of knife or hand-held blade and can result in several common types of wounds (see penetrating wounds) and amputations including:

- Body sliced
- Appendages removed
- Body stabbed
- Body gutted

All of these wounds share the characteristic of having clean, smooth edges from the cutting implement. Body slices are the easiest type of mutilation to determine. Appendage/head removal can be problematic to detect if there is scavenger damage. If a carcass is scavenged in a body region where you suspect mutilation, look for knife cuts on bone (chop wounds) and areas where tissue is cleanly sliced in a straight line. The harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) pictured below is typical of the mutilation observed in cetaceans along the mid-Atlantic US coast.

Pinnipeds and cetaceans are both legally harvested and illegally poached as well as subjected to mutilation. Animals entangled in fishing gear may be mutilated during the process of removal. Poaching is more common in pinnipeds and usually targets the reproductive organs for illicit sale.

Scavenger damage can hamper the observer's ability to determine if mutilation occurred. While the tissue on the head, flippers, and flukes may have been removed with an instrument, scavenger damage to the cut surfaces can make it difficult to assess. These cut surfaces are often the easiest targets for scavengers.

Examples of harvest/mutilation

*Harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) from Virginia with BODY SLICE (left) and APPENDAGE REMOVED (dorsal fin, below). Since there is no harvest allowed in Virginia, this activity is considered mutilation (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*This bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) stranded in Virginia with a BODY SLICE from larynx to anus (above). The unusual thing about this mutilation was that, in addition to the mutilation, all organs were removed (right; © Virginia Aquarium).*

Evaluating a Mutilation Case

In some areas of the United States, it is legal for certain people (particularly native communities) to harvest marine mammals or marine mammal parts for a variety of uses. These marine mammal interactions are legal and are not considered HI.

In most of the mainland US, however, taking of live marine mammals or parts of dead marine mammals is illegal without appropriate authorization, and never for resale. When some or all of a live or dead marine mammal is taken illegally (poached), we consider it a case of human interaction. When carcasses are cut open without any obvious attempt to harvest organs or parts, the damage done to an animal is considered mutilation, also a case of human interaction.

*This harp seal (*Phoca groenlandic*a) carcass in Massachusetts was cut open and gonads were removed. Since there is NO harvest in MA, this is a case of illegal poaching/ mutilation and is considered a case of HI.* (*right; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research*).

FINDINGS OF HI = YES

If the mutilation is postmortem, then the HI did not contribute to the stranding, but the circumstances surrounding the mutilation may be associated with the stranding event (*e.g.* fishery). Unless you have information that the animal WAS or WAS NOT affected by human activity prior to mutilation, you cannot accurately provide a Final Evaluation, therefore it must be scored as CBD.

Evaluation of mutilation cases is problematic since, in most cases, there is very little information about the circumstances surrounding the event. For example, was the animal caught in a net and its appendage(s) removed to get it out of the net or did it strand on the beach and a curious passerby removed the appendage(s) for a 'trophy'? In the former case, the mutilation would have been directly related to the stranding event. In the latter case it would not be related. If you don't know what happened, you should score the Initial HI Evaluation as 0 (Uncertain, CBD).

INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION = Case dependent

4.8 Harassment/Human Interference

Perhaps the most difficult form of human interaction to address and document is interference or harassment.

Definitions

Harassment: Harassment is any human activity, intended or not, that causes an animal to change its behavior. Objectively, if the harassment is not observed by the responder, it is difficult to determine if it occurred, and even more difficult to document it. Subjectively, unless an animal is handled by the harassers (*e.g*. pinniped pup fed, petted, or collected by beachgoers), it is difficult to determine if the harassment caused the stranding event.

If human activity other than that of permitted stranding responders/researchers results in harassment, HI = YES must be the objective conclusion. This is true even if the animal is

dying and is harassed by being put in a truck to be moved by well-meaning (but un-permitted) rescuers. Perhaps the most common cases occur when beach goers push live animals back into the water after stranding. Even the carcass of a dead animal, if handled by unauthorized individuals, is considered human interference. In these cases, the illegal handling does not cause the stranding but, objectively, must be scored YES for signs of HI. However, the subjective evaluation and numeric score allow the examiner to take into account the circumstances surrounding the event = 1 (Improbable).

Although very little on the data sheet is directed toward harassment, it is a very real and prevalent form of HI, especially regarding live pinnipeds. On the data sheet, report a description of the harassment event, including names and contact information of witnesses, in the stranding event section. Indicate image documentation and where any images will be archived. The Initial Human Interaction Evaluation determination will depend on the circumstances of the stranding (or whether a stranding even occurred).

Examples of harassment

Beachgoer approaches resting seal (left; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).

*Feeding and swimming with wild cetaceans like this bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) is illegal in the US and can lead to aggressive behaviors and reduced fitness (above; © NOAA).*

*Harbor seal weanling (*Phoca vitulina*) in MA being harassed by bystander (see shoes at top of image) (above; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

4.9 Unknown or Undetermined Interactions

Even with a broad understanding of marine mammal human interactions, some situations are difficult to understand. In some instances, it may be clear from the types of marks or signs on the animal that some form of human interaction has taken place; however, the exact cause or source of the interaction may not be obvious. When this occurs, it is still important to utilize this protocol to aid in consistently collecting and reporting the data. Do not try to over-interpret what you see. Unfortunately, there will always be some cases for which the cause of the interaction cannot be determined.

Evaluating an Undetermined Interaction Case

This Code 3+ bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) was found with no skin and a cinder block tied to its flukes.

FINDINGS OF HI = YES

The carcass was found floating vertically (rostrum up) in a channel in VA anchored by a cinder block tied to its flukes. The attached cinder block was an obvious sign of HI; however the circumstances that led to this situation were not known. Perhaps a beach-front homeowner towed the carcass offshore and tied the cinder block to it hoping to keep the already dead animal off his/her property. Perhaps the animal was caught in fishing gear and the fisher removed it and weighed it down to make it sink. The only sign of HI was the attached cinder block which was no doubt postmortem (good luck tying a cinder block to a live swimming dolphin!), but it is impossible to know what actually happened. Since we cannot tell which of these hypothetical scenarios (or any other for that matter) may have led to the observed HI, we score the Initial Human Interaction Evaluation as 0 (Uncertain/CBD).

INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION = 0 (Uncertain/CBD)

5.0 Confounding Variables

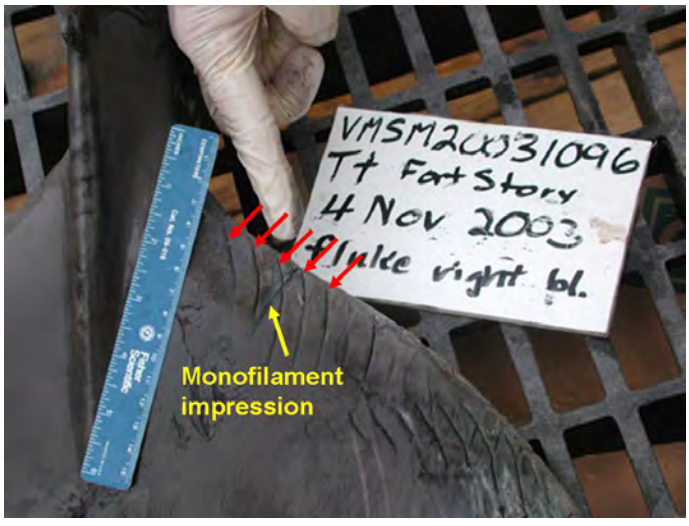
When conducting an HI evaluation, it is important to understand and acknowledge confounding variables. The best pathologist in the world cannot determine if HI is present on a severely decomposed animal. Understanding what can inhibit your exam and what can mimic marks made by human activities is a key part of conducting a thorough examination. This is where experience is helpful. Know what predators and scavengers occur in your region. If you have no other resources, leave a carcass exposed and revisit it repeatedly to see how it decomposes and what marks are left by local wildlife. Confounding variables can include:

- Natural and unknown marks
- Immediate death (exsanguination & asphyxiation)
- Predation
- Scavenger damage (aquatic & terrestrial)
- Decomposition (tissue degradation & bloating)

5.1 Natural and Unknown Marks

Because cetacean skin is delicate, many animals carry lesions and/or scars from conspecifics (members of their own species), predators, or prey. Scars from teeth or 'tooth rakes' are common marks seen on cetaceans. The rakes can be from conspecifics, which is common in the social delphinids, or from predators such as orca or sharks. Deep diving squid eaters such as sperm and beaked whales often have scars and impressions from squid tentacles and scars from cookie cutter sharks. Animals that carry hard barnacles such as humpback whales often have circular scars from barnacle attachment sites. All of these marks can obscure or even be mistaken for HI marks.

Cetacean skin shows impressions and lacerations prominently. Unfortunately, almost anything that touches it leaves marks on a cetacean's skin, which can make it difficult to distinguish natural marks from those left by human activities. In addition, after a cetacean dies, the skin degrades quickly both in water, where it begins to slough, and in air, where it desiccates and sun burns. For example, it is important to take note of the conditions under which an animal strands. Knowing that there is an oyster bar offshore of the marsh where a pilot whale stranded can help explain nonparallel linear lacerations on the ventrum.

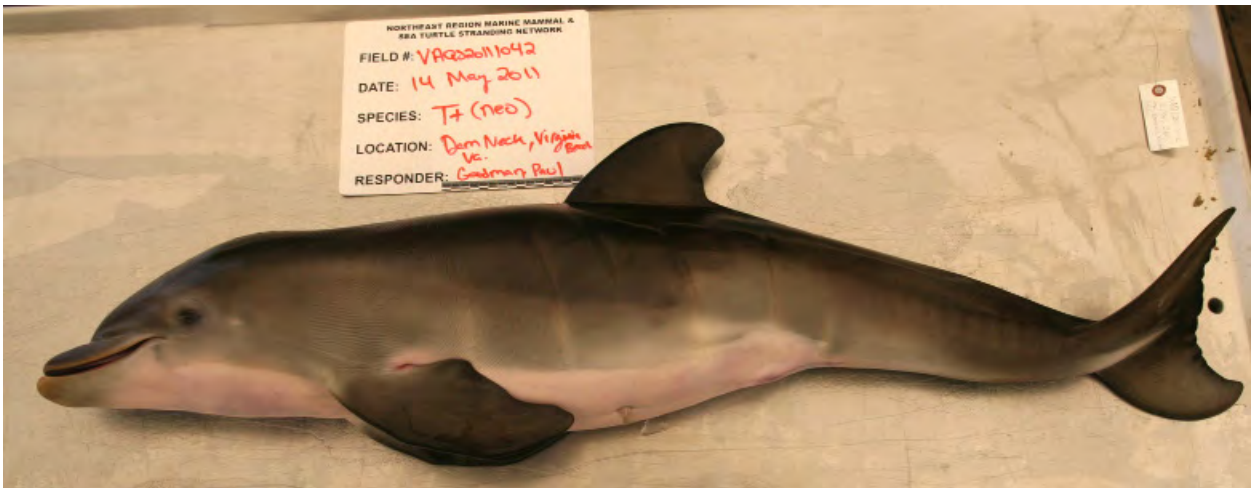


*Dorsal view of the right fluke of a bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with both natural marks (tooth rakes-red arrows) and anthropogenic (human-made) marks (monofilament impression- yellow arrow). This bottlenose dolphin has both recent (darker gray) and healed (white) tooth rakes from other bottlenose dolphins. We know the rakes come from other bottlenose dolphins because of the inter-tooth distance. Other species will occasionally rake each other during social interactions. Bottlenose dolphins have been known to bite and rake harbor porpoises during aggressive interactions (right; © Virginia Aquarium).*

Examples of natural and unknown marks in cetaceans

*This stranded humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) (right-dorsal surface of left fluke; below-ventral surface of right fluke) has healed tooth rake scars (white parallel lines in red circles) from killer whale teeth as well as a possible scar from a previous entanglement (red arrow). Note that the tooth rakes are on the flat surface of the flukes, and the possible entanglement scar wraps around the leading edge of the fluke and continues to the ventral surface (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*The flukes of a bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with unusual lacerations on the dorsal surface (above left). Wider angle view of the same animal (above right). Responders had attempted to retrieve the carcass on the previous day, but did not have the manpower initially to lift the animal over a bulkhead. They took pictures and returned the next day. Pictures from the first day do not show any marks on the flukes, thus we know the marks occurred postmortem. They could have been made by a knife, but it is also possible that a raptor (vulture or eagle) tried to scavenge the carcass. There were no other suspicious marks on the carcass. Not knowing what caused the marks, the responders scored the carcass as CBD (© Virginia Aquarium).*

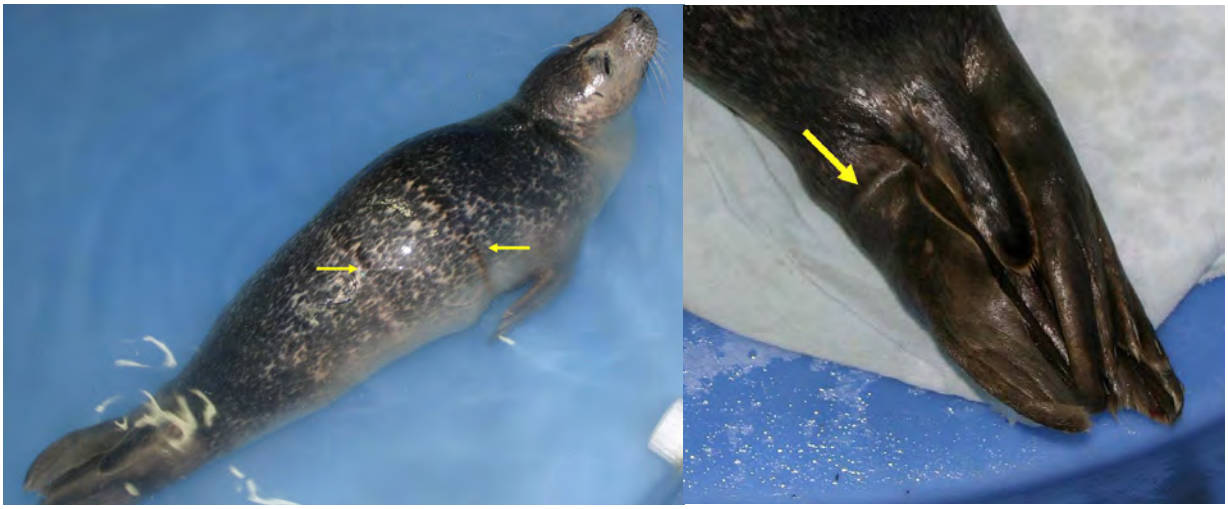


*Neonate and perinate cetaceans like the bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) above and right are both with fetal folds that appear as light colored lines or indentations. The umbilicus of a neonate/ perinate is very tender and erupts upon decomposition. Occasionally called in as entanglement, a thorough exam usually reveals that the 'line' around the animal is intestine. (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*A white-sided dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*; left) stranded in poor external condition (>50% skin missing) with unusual diagonal and 'X-shaped' marks on flank. This case is an example of a degraded animal with unusual marks. This white-sided dolphin had no epidermis on the right side, but it had several thick diagonal marks ~1cm wide and 10cm long. Some of the marks formed an 'X'. There weren't any marks on the leading edges of the dorsal fin, flippers or flukes. Unable to explain the marks, the responders scored it as CBD for HI (© Virginia Aquarium).*

Examples of natural and unknown marks in pinnipeds

Just as with cetaceans, there are times when it is difficult to determine if a lesion found on a pinniped is caused by HI. Pinniped pelts often do not hold the less severe, non-penetrating marks, such as impressions, that are readily visible on cetacean skin. Even when marks are present, it may be difficult to determine the source. In these cases, if you are equally unsure whether the marks are natural (due to predation, scavenging, or disease) or anthropogenic, score the lesion as Signs of HI = CBD.



*Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) showing circumferential impressions around thorax and abdomen (above, left), and circumferential impression around left rear flipper (above, right). This live stranded harbor seal was brought to VAQS for rehabilitation. When it arrived, the fur was dry and, due to the animal's condition, it was kept dry for 24 hours. When wet the marks seen in these images became very prominent. There were no other external lesions on the animal. Unsure of the source of the lesions, the staff scored the animal as CBD for HI. If they examine animals known to have been entangled and observe similar lesions, they may reassess the diagnosis on this seal (© Virginia Aquarium).*

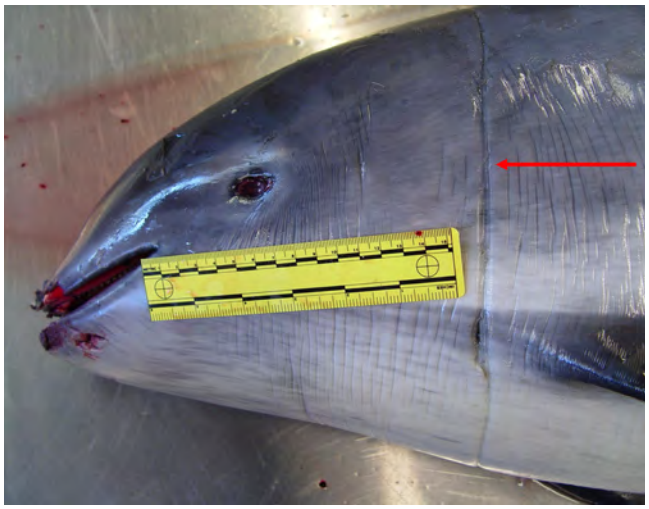
*Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) found on rock jetty with unusual wounds to the head (above, left). In this case, the skull was opened and the brain removed (above, right). While it is not unusual for coyotes in the area to crush a seal's skull, it is uncommon for the brain to be the only tissue eaten. The responders were unsure what caused the lesion and scored it as CBD for HI. If, in the future, the source of the lesion is discovered, the diagnosis will be changed accordingly. Note that the rocks surrounding the animal are clean, showing no signs of struggle (© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

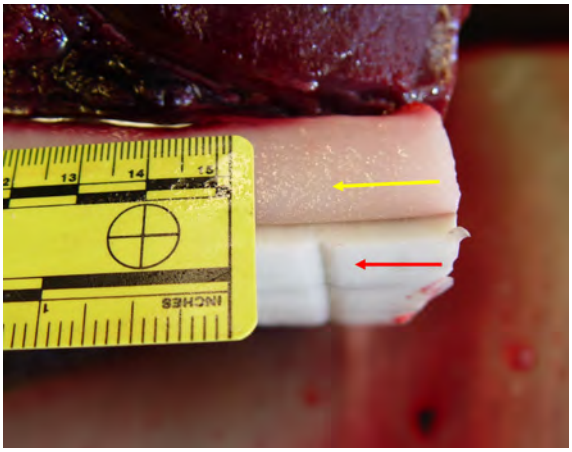
5.2 Rapid Death

Injuries associated with a rapid death (premortem injuries) are common and include situations such as vessel trauma and underwater entrapment. Unfortunately, when injuries occur premortem (immediately prior to death) there is little or no time for tissue reaction before the animal dies. Thus, it can be difficult to evaluate (grossly and histologically) whether the lesions occurred when the animal was alive. This makes the subjective aspect of an HI evaluation challenging.

Examples of HI cases with rapid death

*This image (left) shows the ventral surface of the flukes of a right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). The left fluke of this whale was torn off exposing large vessels which likely caused the animal to rapidly bleed to death. Although, there was no histological support for premortem injury from this wound, a vessel reported hitting a whale of unknown species seven days prior to the stranding. Independently, a recreational fisher reported seeing a whale with half of a fluke bleeding profusely in the same area. This whale stranded approximately 50 miles south of the vessel strike location (© Virginia Aquarium).*





*This harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*; above left) was collected by a fisheries observer after being caught in a gill net. Note the circumferential impression around the head (red arrow). Upon necropsy, dissection of the line mark (red arrow, right) revealed NO underlying gross tissue reaction (yellow arrow, above right) illustrating the result of premortem injury in a confirmed entanglement case where the porpoise died so quickly from forced submergence that the body did not have time to mount an inflammatory response (© Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution).*

5.3 Predation and Scavenger Damage

Predation and scavenger damage are common and can destroy, mask, or mimic evidence of HI. Sharks often feed on live animals and carcasses at sea. Carcasses, and sometimes live animals, stranded on beaches are also exposed to scavengers and predators of all types. The most destructive terrestrial scavengers are birds (gulls, vultures, some raptors) and mammals (coyotes, foxes, bears and others). Often animals are scavenged by a host of critters.

Learning to recognize evidence of scavenger and predation damage common in your area is important. Comparing exposed tissue to that which was buried or submerged can help determine what marks were caused by scavengers and predators and what marks were present before the stranding (such as HI lesions). There are often characteristics that are common to certain types of predation and scavenging:

- Birds tend to target the eyes in cetaceans and pinnipeds, and the mandible (lower jaw) in cetaceans, often before an animal has died
- Coyotes will partially skin a seal to expose muscle and fat, leaving bare bones
- Coyotes target the rear flanks, head, and throat if attacking a live animal (bite wounds are similar to HI lesions such as gaff wounds (look at the number of wounds and wound patterns)
- Foxes and raccoons will chew on the distal edges of fins and flippers

Terrestrial Predators and Scavengers

If an area is undisturbed when you approach the carcass, look for tracks in the substrate. Birds and mammals leave distinct tracks which will give you an idea of who/what has visited the carcass before you. Coyotes in the northeast, bears in Alaska, and other large, terrestrial predators will attack live animals stranded or hauled out on beaches.

*Harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) dorsal peduncle scavenged by foxes and birds (left; © Virginia Aquarium).*

*Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) from Cape Cod, Massachusetts scavenged by coyote (below; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

*Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) with coyote damage to head (above © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

Examples of damage from terrestrial predators and scavengers

*Scene from a predatory event between a harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*) and a coyote (above, left). Note the bloody trail in the upper portion of the image; this is where the coyote dragged the animal up the beach. Note the paw prints in the forefront of the scene (© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research)The damage done to the carcass can be substantial (above, right). In this case, the skull was exposed and crushed, and skin, fat, and muscle were torn from the thorax (© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research). Also note the gull tracks in the sand indicating post mortem scavenging.*

*Gull scavenging presents as small linear marks usually on the head and flat surfaces of the body. If there is an existing wound and/or the body cavity is open, scavenging raptors such as vultures and eagles may completely remove internal organs. On this harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena; above right*), scavenging birds targeted the eyes and jaw fat. This lesion pattern is typical of bird scavenging, but can be mistaken by inexperienced observers as a gunshot lesion (© Virginia Aquarium). In Cape Cod, MA birds may "scavenge" live stranded animals. In fact, bird damage to the eyes and blowhole is a common reason for euthanasia in mass stranded dolphins.*

Marine Predators and Scavengers

Shark attacks on live animals and scavenging of dead animals are both common occurrences. It can be challenging to determine whether shark damage was antemortem, premortem, or postmortem, so we group both together as predation and scavenging. Other marine scavengers (amphipods, crabs, *etc*.) tend to leave marks similar to terrestrial scavengers.

While there are other marine scavengers, sharks pose the most significant hindrance to HI evaluation because of the size of the wounds they create and the amount of tissue they remove. The location of shark lesions can be indicative of whether lesions were pre- or post-mortem. When attacking live prey, sharks tend to target the genital area, approaching from below and behind their prey. When scavenging a dead animal, sharks will target any exposed area and may concentrate on areas surrounding existing wounds. For example, bloated carcasses generally float belly-up, resulting in shark bites on the dorsal surface. An area that has a lesion, especially if there are open wounds, is often the target of attack. Look carefully around bite wounds for evidence of other underlying lesions (especially propeller cuts). Learn to recognize shark 'tastes' (tooth marks without a bite/removal of tissue) and shark tooth rakes and distinguish them from line marks.

Examples of damage from marine predators and scavengers

*Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) stranded in Virginia with a shark bite and missing flukes (left). Compare the curved shape of the large bite wound to the straight line of the severed peduncle. It is unlikely, but not impossible that a shark would sever the flukes. Even a large shark would leave a slightly curved lesion as opposed to the straight lesion seen here. This carcass was scored as YES for APPENDAGES REMOVED because the lesion was indicative of the flukes being cut off instead of bitten (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*Neonate or stillborn bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with shark bite to the peduncle (© Virginia Aquarium).*

*Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with shark bites. The ventral orientation of the bites may indicate ante- or premortem attack (© Virginia Aquarium).*

5.4 Decomposition

When examining a degraded carcass, there is very little you can do to salvage all but the most obvious external HI lesions. If, however, a carcass is sunburned on one side, it may be relatively intact on the other. Protecting the 'good' side from the sun until examination can help you with evaluation. If you are transporting a sunburned carcass, make sure to leave it burned side up in the transport vehicle. Badly decomposed, desiccated, or sunburned carcasses should rarely receive a score of NO for Signs of HI because it is unlikely that anyone could detect HI lesions in the face of decomposition. When carcasses such as these have clear signs of HI it is often challenging to make a subjective final determination other than 0 (CBD).

Cetaceans degrade very quickly externally when skin is exposed to sun, wind, and heat. When floating or submerged, the carcass loses its epidermis revealing the white blubber or hypodermis. In both cetaceans and pinnipeds, peeling, sloughing, and/or sunburned skin obscures marks, as does freezing and desiccation. As animals decompose, appendages degrade, the body cavity opens, and evaluation becomes even more difficult. If you cannot examine a carcass immediately, cover it with a wet towel or put it in the shade. If you must freeze a carcass before examining, place it in a tightly wrapped plastic bag to reduce freezer burn. It is important to note that the freezing process itself can create marks that mimic HI to the inexperienced observer. Freezer burns or desiccation can cause skin to crack creating lines not unlike lacerations from twine or net. However, these freezer artifacts are often found on the flat surfaces of the body (remember that net and line marks are most often found on the leading edges and around appendages and the head). Often the freezer marks affect an appendage, but rarely cross over the leading edge from dorsal to ventral surface. These freezer marks are also more jagged in appearance. Additionally, the bag in which the carcass is frozen may leave linear impressions on the carcass. Whenever possible, it is best to complete the HI exam before freezing.

Examples of damage from decomposition

*Decomposed (code 4) harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) missing head, appendages and most of the skin (right; © Virginia Aquarium).*

*Decomposed (late code 3) bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with desiccated and peeling skin and rendering blubber (left; © Virginia Aquarium).*

*Ventral view of a badly decomposed (late code 3) harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) that had been frozen and thawed (left; © IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).*

When a carcass pours out of a bag (right) (frozen and thawed) there is very little you can do in the form of an HI exam (or any exam for that matter). With any type of HI, decomposition obscures lesions and causes carcasses to bloat, then deflate, making evaluation difficult (© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).

*A code 4 or 5 carcass, like that of this humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeanglae*) (left) may exhibit broken bones or missing appendages, but the cause is as likely due to decomposition as to HI. Generally, unless gear or debris are attached or ingested, very decomposed stranded marine mammals should be scored CBD (© Virginia Aquarium).*

Evaluating a Decomposed Carcass

Left oblique view of a code 3 white-sided dolphin *(Lagenorhynchus acutus)* showing degradation of the skin *(above)*. Note the peeling skin on the dorsal thorax and condition of the dorsal fin. This is an example of the other end of the code 3 spectrum from the first case study.

EXTERNAL EXAM: Although there was some bloating, we felt that we could confidently say the carcass was not emaciated because of the fully rounded epaxial musculature. As seen from the image, there was a considerable amount of skin loss, especially on the right side. The dorsal fin and flippers were degraded and/or scavenged. Since they were present, although degraded, we scored the appendages as NO for mutilation (appendages removed/mutilation).

Despite its condition, the body was intact and was scored as NO for body sliced/mutilation. There was no gear or debris on the body. It was difficult to assess the body for other pathologies and HI lesions so we scored CBD in both of these fields.

INTERNAL EXAM: There were whole squid and whole fish in the fore-stomach. Both lungs were fluid filled, heavy and sopping. There was no other obvious pathology.

HISTORY: This was one of many offshore delphinids that stranded in the area in spring of 2004 during an Unusual Mortality Event (UME). Most carcasses were decomposed. Those that had stomachs had recently eaten squid. HI was suspected, but no evidence was obtained.

Findings of HI = CBD

Although you may not be able to objectively say there were signs of HI, if you feel that there was something other than natural death involved, it never hurts to write down your thoughts in a necropsy report or on the HI form. You may revisit the case in the future with new knowledge. Despite several observations consistent with fishery interaction (full stomach, robust body condition, fluid in lungs) there were no definitive HI marks.

6.0 Necropsy and Sampling

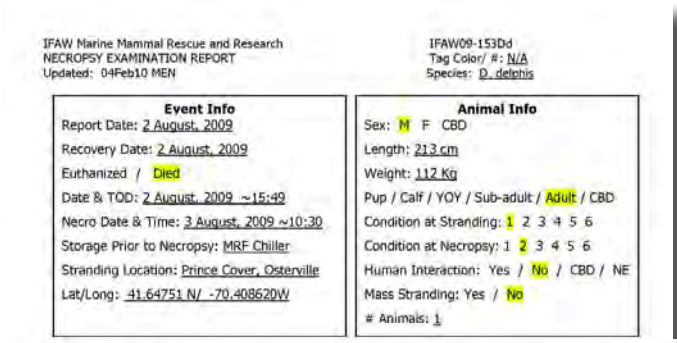
Most stranding response organizations have a system for examining those animals that wash ashore dead, die, or are humanely euthanized. A human interaction evaluation on a carcass is not complete until a full necropsy has been conducted (obviously, this is not the case for live stranded animals). The internal examination is an important part of the overall process because it can provide insights into the overall health of the individual and may also yield further evidence of human interaction. The HI data sheet guides the examiner to note particular internal findings that are consistent with human interaction. For example, debris or gear found in the gastrointestinal tract is a form of HI (debris/gear ingestion). Froth in the lungs and bronchi is indicative of an agonal death and may help support or refute external findings (froth in the lungs can be caused by euthanasia in some cases, but may alternatively indicate a struggle at the time of death such as struggling due to entanglement in fishing gear). As stated previously, a full stomach paired with net or line marks, *supports* a finding of fishery interaction. Remember that there are some internal findings that are considered *consistent with, but not indicative of* fishery interaction. These findings can be used to support other evidence, but cannot stand alone as evidence of fishery interaction (See 4.1 Fishery Interaction). Bruising and sub-dermal staining consistent with hemorrhage may reveal blunt trauma that was not evident externally. These are just a few examples of the many types of evidence that may be found internally. Thus, whenever possible, a full internal exam (necropsy) should be done.

Standardized protocol

As with the external exam, it is important to develop a standard routine when conducting a necropsy. Taking apart the animal and sampling it in the same order each time will help to minimize mistakes. Although a necropsy protocol is not included as part of the Human Interaction Evaluation protocol, the HI data sheet does prompt the examiner to describe key internal elements that may show signs of HI. Several necropsy manuals exist for reference, such as Pugliares *et. al.* 2007. Be sure to reference your necropsy report in the comments section of the HI data sheet.

Necropsy report

The Necropsy Report Form is an important part of the documentation process. Most institutions have developed their own data sheet to meet their needs (example at right). Many institutions will readily

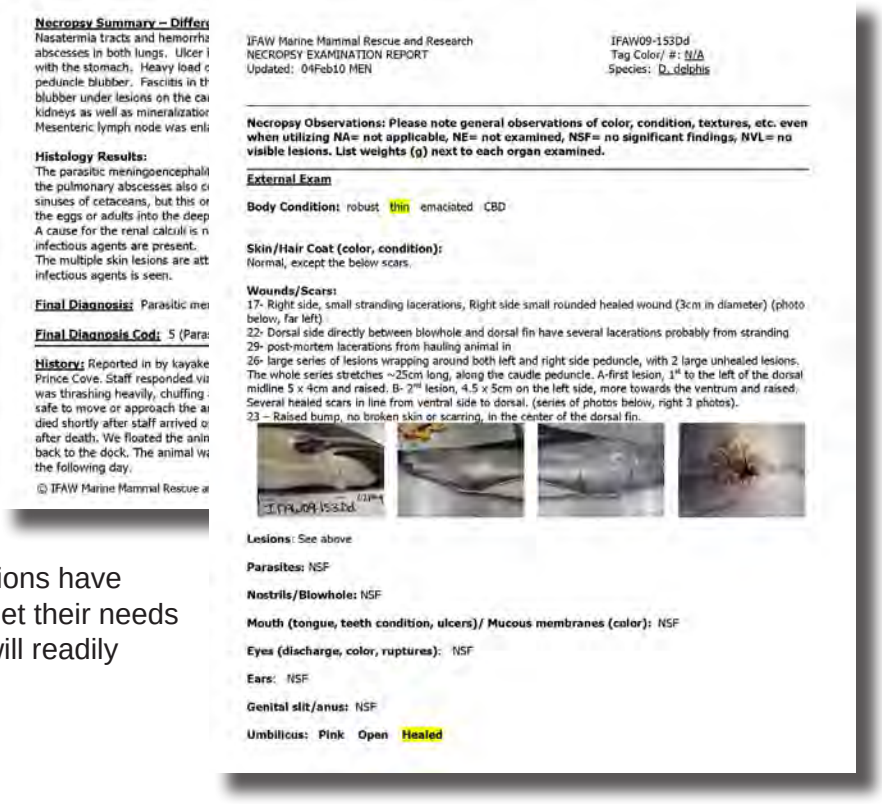


IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research
NECROPSY EXAMINATION REPORT
Updated: 04Feb10 MEN

IFAW09-153Dd
Tag Color/ #: N/A
Species: D. delphis

Event Info
Report Date: 2 August, 2009
Recovery Date: 2 August, 2009
Euthanized / Died
Date & TOD: 2 August, 2009 ~15:49
Necro Date & Time: 3 August, 2009 ~10:30
Storage Prior to Necropsy: MRF Chiller
Stranding Location: Prince Cover, Osterville
Lat/Long: 41.64751 N/ -70.408620W

Animal Info
Sex: M F CBD
Length: 213 cm
Weight: 112 Kg
Pup / Calf / YOY / Sub-adult / Adult / CBD
Condition at Stranding: 1 2 3 4 5 6
Condition at Necropsy: 1 2 3 4 5 6
Human Interaction: Yes / No / CBD / NE
Mass Stranding: Yes / No
Animals: 1



Necropsy Summary – Differ
Nasatermia tracts and hemorrha
abscesses in both lungs. Ulcer
with the stomach. Heavy load
peduncle blubber. Fasciitis in th
blubber under lesions on the ca
kidneys as well as mineralizatio
Mesenteric lymph node was enl

Histology Results:
The parasitic meningoencephali
the pulmonary abscesses also c
sinuses of cetaceans, but this o
the eggs or adults into the deep
A cause for the renal calculi is n
infectious agents are present.
The multiple skin lesions are att
infectious agents is seen.

Final Diagnosis: Parasitic me

Final Diagnosis Cod: 5 (Para

History: Reported in by kayake
Prince Cove. Staff responded vi
was thrashing heavily, chuffing
safe to move or approach the a
died shortly after staff arrived o
after death. We floated the anin
back to the dock. The animal w
the following day.

© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue a

IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research
NECROPSY EXAMINATION REPORT
Updated: 04Feb10 MEN

IFAW09-153Dd
Tag Color/ #: N/A
Species: D. delphis

Necropsy Observations: Please note general observations of color, condition, textures, etc. even when utilizing NA= not applicable, NE= not examined, NSF= no significant findings, NVL= no visible lesions. List weights (g) next to each organ examined.

External Exam

Body Condition: robust thin emaciated CBD

Skin/Hair Coat (color, condition):
Normal, except the below scars.

Wounds/Scars:
17- Right side, small stranding lacerations, Right side small rounded healed wound (3cm in diameter) (photo below, far left)
22- Dorsal side directly between blowhole and dorsal fin have several lacerations probably from stranding
29- post-mortem lacerations from hauling animal in
26- large series of lesions wrapping around both left and right side peduncle, with 2 large unhealed lesions. The whole series stretches ~25cm long, along the caudle peduncle. A-first lesion, 1st to the left of the dorsal midline 5 x 4cm and raised. B- 2nd lesion, 4.5 x 5cm on the left side, more towards the ventrum and raised. Several healed scars in line from ventral side to dorsal. (series of photos below, right 3 photos).
23 – Raised bump, no broken skin or scarring, in the center of the dorsal fin.

Lesions: See above

Parasites: NSF

Nostrils/Blowhole: NSF

Mouth (tongue, teeth condition, ulcers)/ Mucous membranes (color): NSF

Eyes (discharge, color, ruptures): NSF

Ears: NSF

Genital slit/anus: NSF

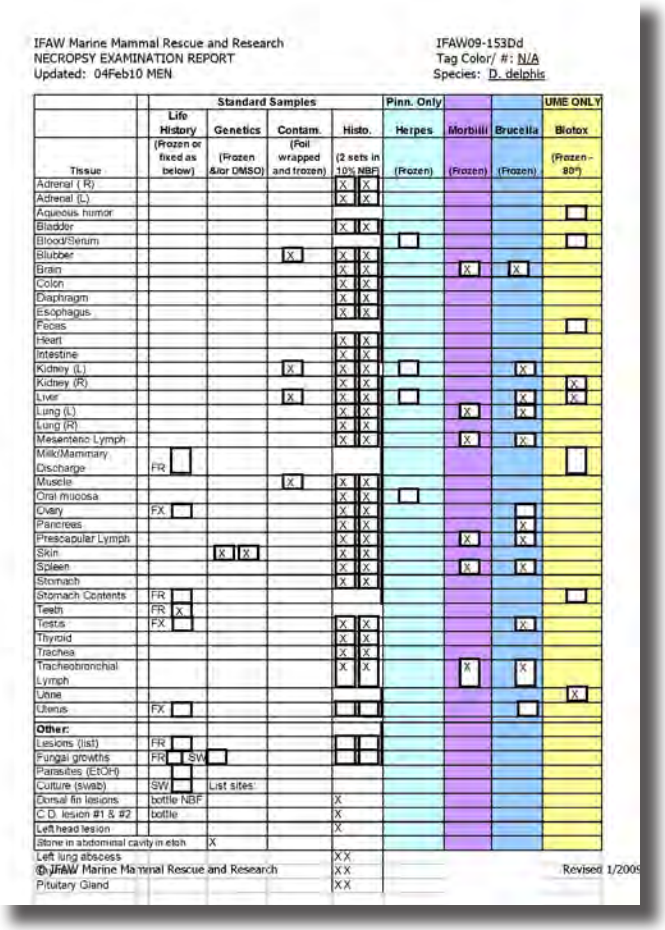
Umbilicus: Pink Open Healed

share their form for use by other stranding responders. If you do not currently have a necropsy form, contact other networks for examples and either adopt one of the forms for your institution, or craft an original to best suit your needs. A good Necropsy Report Form should capture basic data such as field number, stranding location, date of stranding, date of necropsy, storage prior to necropsy, and the name(s) of the prosector(s). Every Necropsy Report should include a brief stranding history and a summary external exam. The internal exam is often recorded by organ system or individual organ. Examiners should provide as much objective information as possible regarding their gross observations. Note the internal condition of the animal, including the appearance of the organs, color, texture, size, and any abnormalities. Also describe in detail any lesions, tumors, abscesses, sub-dermal staining/hemorrhage, *etc*. Inserting digital images into the report is very useful for pathologists and others reviewing the case or examining any samples. Examples of Necropsy Report Forms are included in the appendices of Geraci and Lounsbury (2005).

In order to provide as much information as possible to pathologists, stranding organizations should submit a Necropsy Report with any samples disseminated for histopathology. Your notes and pictures may provide critical insights into their microscopic observations, increasing their ability to accurately interpret their findings and determine cause of death and other valuable information.

Suggested sampling

In addition to recording your gross observations, sample collection is an important element in the Human Interaction Evaluation process. The confirmation of the SUBJECTIVE evaluation may lie in the analysis of HI samples. Determining whether an injury has occurred ante-, pre-, or postmortem will aid in confirming your final diagnosis. In addition to collecting standard samples (genetics, life history, contaminants, histopathology, biotoxicology, virology, microbiology, *etc*.), be sure to sample wounds or other evidence of human interaction. Whenever possible, HI lesions should be sampled for histopathology. Collect HI samples in the same manner as standard histopathology samples. Be sure to capture normal tissue on either side of the lesion and sample past the full depth of the lesion (if possible). A list of standard tissues sampled during necropsy is included in the appendices of Geraci and Lounsbury (2005) and an example of a sample collection form is to the right.



IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research
NECROPSY EXAMINATION REPORT
Updated: 04Feb10 MEN

IFAW09-153Dd
Tag Color/ #: N/A
Species: D. delphis

	Standard Samples				Pinn. Only			UME ONLY
Tissue	Life History (Frozen or fixed as below)	Genetics (Frozen &/or DMSO)	Contam. (Foil wrapped and frozen)	Histo. (2 sets in 10% NBF)	Herpes (Frozen)	Morbilli (Frozen)	Brucella (Frozen)	Biotox (Frozen -80°)
Adrenal (R)				X X				
Adrenal (L)				X X				
Aqueous humor								
Bladder				X X				
Blood/Serum								
Blubber			X	X X				
Brain				X X		X	X	
Colon				X X				
Diaphragm				X X				
Esophagus				X X				
Feces								
Heart				X X				
Intestine				X X				
Kidney (L)			X	X X			X	
Kidney (R)				X X				X
Liver			X	X X			X	X
Lung (L)				X X		X	X	
Lung (R)				X X				
Mesenteric Lymph				X X		X	X	
Milk/Mammary Discharge	FR							
Muscle			X	X X				
Oral mucosa				X X				
Ovary	FX			X X				
Pancreas				X X			X	
Prescapular Lymph				X X		X	X	
Skin		X X		X X				
Spleen				X X		X	X	
Stomach				X X				
Stomach Contents	FR							
Teeth	FR X							
Testis	FX			X X			X	
Thyroid				X X				
Trachea				X X				
Tracheobronchial Lymph				X X		X	X	
Ulna								X
Uterus	FX							
Other:								
Lesions (list)	FR							
Fungal growths	FR SW							
Parasites (EtOH)								
Culture (swab)	SW	List sites:						
Dorsal fin lesions	bottle NBF			X				
C.D. lesion #1 & #2	bottle			X				
Left head lesion				X				
Stone in abdominal cavity in etoh		X						
Left lung abscess				X X				
Pituitary Gland				X X				

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7.0 Outreach and Education

The role of public sentiment in conservation and management

Marine mammals tend to generate a great deal of public interest. Stranding events are often the only time that members of the general public get to see these "charismatic megafauna" up-close and personal. Emotions can run high at stranding events, with bystanders wishing to help in the efforts to rescue live stranded animals or investigate the deaths of animals that do not survive. Often, there is a rush to find a cause and to lay blame for a death. Bystanders witnessing a mass stranding of dolphins may begin to ask if military actions or ocean noise caused the stranding. Others may suggest pollution as a culprit or fisheries interactions. The reality is that human interactions pose a difficult dilemma when dealing with the public. Strandings represent a wonderful opportunity to educate the public about marine mammals and the need for sound management and conservation to protect these species. However, it is unwise to cast blame while investigating a stranding. It is important that your conservative approach to evaluating the carcass be carried over into your interactions with the public. In some instances, HI cases may become law enforcement cases. It is inappropriate to discuss the details of an open case, thus, the best response in all instances is to explain that a thorough exam must be completed and the cause of the event is under investigation pending final results of analyses.

A staff member discusses the response taking place with local beachgoers (© IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue and Research).

Take care in speaking with bystanders and remember that a thorough exam is necessary before any conclusions can be made, including diagnostics for live animals and a full necropsy and sample analysis for dead animals. In these days of cell phone video, Facebook, and Twitter, casual remarks not meant for the public can easily become the next phenomenon on YouTube. Guard your comments carefully and understand that almost everything you say sounds bad when taken out of context. However, it is also ill-advised to ignore the obvious. If an animal is on the beach with net or other gear on it, or with obvious propellar wounds, acknowledge their presence, but reinforce the fact that one cannot determine the potential impact without further analysis (whether the interaction was ante- or postmortem, whether the interaction may have caused the stranding or death of the animal).

Being sensitive to other resource users

Resource use conflicts abound in the realm of natural resource management. Although lesions you observe may be due to fishery, vessel, or other human interactions, it is important to remember that the best likelihood of resolving these conflicts is through cooperative efforts. Alienating fishers will not help to reduce entanglements. Think very carefully before you publicly implicate an industry or group. Remember that, in many cases, commercial fishers have permits to legally take marine mammals. If you want cooperation in trying to solve a problem with HI, the worst way to go about it is to publicly accuse an individual or group, especially if you have

not yet conducted a thorough exam. Furthermore, stranding responders often rely on fishers and other marine resource users to report strandings and aid in response (providing access to injured or deceased animals offshore, *etc*.). Take care not to alienate these groups.

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Appendix I:

Human Interaction Data Sheet and Instructions

Protocol for Examining Marine Mammals for Signs of Human Interaction

Exam Information *(fill in or circle most appropriate)*

1 Field #: _____ Species: _____

2 Examiner: _____ Recorder: _____

3 Date of exam:_____ Condition code (at exam): 1 2 3 4 5 CBD

4 Preservation: alive fresh frozen frozen/thawed Body condition: emaciated not emaciated CBD

5 Documentation: digital print slide video Image disposition:_____

6 Integument : normal abnormal decomposed % Skin missing: <10% 10-25% 25-50% >50%

7

Explanation of terms:
YES = I have examined the area and found signs of human interaction
NO = I have examined the area did not find signs of human interaction
CBD = I have examined the area and could not determine whether there were signs of human interaction (*i.e.* the part was missing, degraded, or signs were ambiguous)
NE = I did not examine the area
NA = this animal doesn't normally have that part (*i.e.* seals have no dorsal, dolphins have no rear flippers)

	WHOLE BODY EXAM	YES	NO	CBD	NE	NA	Image taken
8	Appendage(s) removed / Mutilation *(with instrument)*						
9	Pelt removed / Mutilation *(with instrument)*						
10	Body sliced / Mutilation *(with instrument)*						
11	Gear / Debris present on animal *(including tags)*						
12	Gear / Debris retained *(name & contact info in Comments)*						
13	External pathology *(pox, tattoo lesion, abscess)*						
14	Natural markings *(scars, tooth rakes, unusual pigmentation)*						
15	HI lesions *(fishery, gunshot, propeller, healed HI scar, brand)*						

16 Predation / scavenger damage *(circle all anatomical areas where damage hinders evaluation; numbers coincide with anatomical areas below)*: 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 NONE

FILL IN TABLE FOR **ALL POSSIBLE FINDINGS OF HI**
Do not use for natural markings/pathology.

	DETAILED EXAM OF ANATOMICAL AREAS	YES	NO	CBD	NE/NA	Type of Lesion: Impression/ Laceration	Penetrating wound	Healed HI scar	Abrasion	Other / CBD	Origin of Lesion: Gear - Twine Type: Twine / line	Net	other / CBD	Monofilament	Multifilament	CBD	Other: Propeller	Gunshot	Other / CBD	Image taken?
17	Rostrum/snout																			
18	Mandible																			
19	Head																			
20	L Front appendage																			
21	R Front appendage																			
22	Body R L																			
23	Dorsum/dorsal fin																			
24	Ventrum																			
25	Peduncle																			
26	L Rear appendage																			
27	R Rear appendage																			
28	Flukes/tail																			
29																				

Field #:_____

	INTERNAL EXAM Date _____	YES	NO	Partial	CBD	Image taken	Detailed Info *(circle all that apply)*
30	Internal exam conducted				■	■	*Details in Comments section -use line number*
31	Bruising/blunt trauma			■			*Details in Comments section -use line number*
32	Skeleton examined				■		*Details in Comments section -use line number*
33	Broken bones present			■			*Associated tissue reaction: YES NO CBD*
34	Mouth/GI tract examined *(circle contents)*				■		*intact prey partially digested hard parts only* ***debris/gear*** *empty other*
35	Lungs/bronchi examined				■		*Details in Comments section -use line number*
36	Lung/bronchi contents			■			*froth fluid air* (color:)
37	Bullet/projectile found			■			*found using: CT X-ray dissection (collected? Y N)*
38	Other lesions noted			■	■		*Details in Comments section -use line number*

39 **Comments** (*note line number from left margin before each comment*):

40 **Findings of Human Interaction:** ☐YES ☐NO ☐CBD (Exam Type: external__ internal___ both ___)
(transfer to Level A Datasheet)

41 Type of HI: (provide details in comments)

☐ Entanglement (gear__ debris__ CBD__) ☐ Vessel trauma (sharp__ blunt__ both__)
☐ Hooking (recreational__ commercial__ CBD__) ☐ Gunshot ☐ Mutilation
☐ Ingestion (gear__ debris__ CBD__) ☐ Harassment ☐CBD/Other_____

42 **Stranding Event History/Circumstances:**

43 **INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION:** If you marked YES above (line 40) evaluate the external exam, necropsy, carcass condition and circumstances surrounding the stranding event to answer the question below. *Remember to be conservative in your subjective evaluation*.
What is the likelihood that the finding of human interaction (line 40), contributed to the stranding event?

0: Uncertain (CBD) 1: Improbable 2: Suspect 3: Probable

44 **Justification:**

Final human interaction evaluation requires additional data from level B and C analyses as well as review by a veterinary pathologist.

PROTOCOL FOR EVALUATING MARINE MAMMALS FOR SIGNS OF HUMAN INTERACTION

Introduction

Evaluating marine mammals for signs of human interaction requires consistent, objective examination by trained personnel. This document is meant to accompany formal training by experienced stranding network participants. This protocol is divided into an objective data collection section and a more subjective initial human interaction diagnosis. The primary goal of this protocol is to determine whether evidence of human interaction is present on the animal. The secondary, and more difficult, goal is to determine whether human activities contributed to the stranding event. A positive score for Findings of Human Interaction results from an objective evaluation of an animal or carcass. This evaluation does not attempt to determine whether the signs of human interaction occurred before, during, or after a stranding event and does not attempt to qualify the severity of the interaction.

The subjective Initial Human Interaction Evaluation takes into account the circumstances of the stranding event and the animal's physical condition. A high score indicates that human activities most likely caused the stranding. A low score indicates that although signs of human interaction are present, the likelihood that the interaction caused the stranding is very low. For example, old, healed propeller scars on a known whale are unlikely to have caused a stranding during a domoic acid event and a dead dolphin calf covered by debris on a beach following a hurricane is unlikely to have died due to entanglement.

Determining the cause of death is not an objective of this protocol. Without further evaluation, such as histopathology, and review by veterinarians, pathologists and/or other experts, the exact reason for stranding and cause of death cannot be definitively determined.

Human interaction (HI) data illustrate where problems between marine mammals and humans occur. When collected carefully and consistently, these data can be used to describe the types of interaction taking place (*e.g.* monofilament net, multifilament net, small or large vessel interaction, ingestion of debris, *etc.*), thus providing a sound scientific basis for policy and management decisions. The nature of strandings makes it inadvisable to use human interaction data to estimate mortality or changes in the mortality rate due to human interaction.

In addition, there are categories of human interaction that are difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate such as strandings that result from persistent harassment, those that result in detrimental behaviors such as surfacing too quickly from a dive after exposure to sub-lethal sound, as well as long-term effects of man-made products that may result in lowered immunity, disease, or reduced reproduction. There are new activities such as renewable energy and aquaculture operations that are just beginning to be exploited in the US. We cannot point to a mark or a diagnostic test that can tell us whether a stranded whale has been exposed to active sonar or to sound generated by a wind farm. We cannot guarantee that a seal pup was never exposed to humans or their activities. Finally, we must acknowledge that we do not understand the effects of multiple human interaction stressors on marine mammals.

We must acknowledge that, in some way, human activities have affected the lives of every marine mammal, but for our purposes using this form, we are trying to document those human activities that are consistently observable and can be documented by stranding responders.

Definitions

In order to effectively evaluate marine mammals for signs of human interaction, you must understand what you are looking for. Below are terms and explanations of data sheet sections:

Document developed by IFAW MMRR and VAQS (2012) with funding from the John H. Prescott Grant Program

For most of the sections, you must choose among the following answers:

YES you have examined the area (*i.e*. left front appendage, snout) and you found signs of human interaction

NO you have examined the area (*i.e*. left front appendage, snout) and you found NO signs of human interaction

CBD (Could not Be Determined) which means either: (1) you have examined the area and could not determine whether the marks you saw were signs of human interaction, (2) you could not properly examine the area because it was degraded (scavenged, skin/pelt missing, mangled, *etc*.), or (3) you could not examine the area because it was missing (removed, decomposed)

NE you did not examine the area (an explanation as to why is often helpful – *e.g*. it was too dark; the animal was to large to roll over, *etc*.)

NA this question is not applicable to this animal (*e.g*. it is a seal and doesn't have a dorsal fin, or it is a dolphin and doesn't have rear appendages)

Strategy for filling out the human interaction data sheet

Each line on the data sheet is numbered in the left hand margin. These numbers serve two purposes: (1) each number corresponds to a section within these instructions with details about how to complete that line; (2) the line numbers should be entered in the comments section on the second page of the data sheet to indicate to which item the comment refers.

Page 1:

EXAM INFORMATION: Fill in or circle the most appropriate answer for each of the fields.

1 *Field #*: unique identifying number originally assigned to the animal by response personnel. Note: the field number NEVER changes. If other filing numbers are added or accession numbers from other institutions are added, they should be noted as "additional identifiers".
Species: note the genus and species or common name of the animal.

2 *Examiner*: the person evaluating the animal.
Recorder: the person recording the information on the data sheet.

3 *Date of exam*: the date that you are conducting the human interaction evaluation.
condition code (at exam): the condition code of the animal at the time of the human interaction evaluation. Use Smithsonian Institution condition codes (Geraci and Lounsbury 2005).

4 *Preservation*: circle one of following - ALIVE, FRESH (not previously frozen), FROZEN (completely or partially frozen while exam was conducted), or FROZEN/THAWED (previously frozen, but completely thawed before exam).
Body condition: circle one of following - EMACIATED (clearly thin, concave epaxial muscle, obvious neck, ribs, scapulae, hip bones, and/or vertebral processes), NOT EMACIATED (robust or slightly thin, but not fitting the description of emaciated above) or CBD could not be determined (bloated, decomposed, not examined, *etc*.).

5 *Documentation*: circle all forms of photo/video documentation that apply.
Image disposition: indicate which camera, disk, tape, *etc*. that images were taken or stored on and the acronym of the organization that is maintaining them.

6 *Integument*: *(*skin, fur, hide*)* circle one of following - NORMAL (as if it were healthy and alive), ABNORMAL (conditions not associated with decomposition such as: alopecia, skin lesions, sloughing, abrasions, *etc*.) or DECOMPOSED/SCAVENGED (post-mortem changes such as peeling, sunburn, or scavenger damage).
% Skin missing: Circle the most appropriate number. Note that this does not apply to alopecia (fur loss) but to SKIN loss.

7 *Explanation of terms*: definitions of common terms used throughout the data sheet.

WHOLE BODY EXAM: Before beginning a detailed exam, take a look at the whole animal. If possible, look at all angles and surfaces. Following your whole animal exam, check the most appropriate choice for each category. If you check YES or CBD, describe what you see in the *Comments* section on the

next page, noting the appropriate line number. Indicate whether you collected an image of an area with a Y (Yes) or N (No) in the *Image taken* section. If you are unable to examine any areas, note the details in the *Comments* section.

8 *Appendages removed* (*with instrument*): Check YES if the head or any appendages (limbs, dorsal fin, fluke, *etc*.) appear to have been removed from the animal with an instrument (*e.g.* if there are obvious straight line cuts or straight nicks to the bone). In the lower 48 states of the US, this would be consistent with mutilation. In other areas, such as AK, this may be evidence of the legal harvest of a marine mammal. It is essential to work with local communities and agencies to interpret your findings in these cases. Check NO if all appendages are intact. Check CBD if you are unsure why an appendage is missing or if you cannot examine all appendages. If it appears an appendage was completely removed by scavenging or predation (*e.g*. shark bite removed entire dorsal fin) you should check CBD.

9 *Pelt removed* (*with instrument*): Check YES if the pelt appears to have been removed with an instrument (knife, scraper). Check NO if the pelt is intact (even if the animal's skin is intact but the hair/fur is missing). Check CBD if you are unsure (due to decomposition, *etc*.) of whether the animal's pelt was removed. Again, removal of the pelt in most regions of the US would be considered mutilation; however, in areas where harvesting is permitted, care must be taken in interpreting and documenting the interaction. If legal harvest is suspected, contact your Regional Coordinator for guidance on documentation and reporting. Check NA if the animal has no pelt (cetacean or manatee).

10 *Body sliced* (*with instrument*): Check YES if the carcass appears to be sliced with one or more cuts (from a knife or other blade), consistent with either legal harvest or mutilation (as above, dependent on the region). Multiple parallel cuts are often indicative of propeller wounds and should be noted under the *HI Lesions* category. Check NO if the body is intact or open body cavity is obviously due to natural causes (*e.g.* scavenging, predation). Check CBD if the body cavity has been penetrated and you are unsure of the cause.

11 *Gear/debris present on animal:* Check YES if the animal is entangled in gear (net, line, pot, buoy, line with hook, *etc*.) or debris (anything else). Check NO if there is no gear/debris on the animal. Check CBD if you are unsure for any reason (*e.g*. gear/debris is found on, but not wrapped around the animal, or gear/debris was reported on the animal but apparently removed before you responded). Note *gear/debris present on animal* = YES if tags (roto, satellite, *etc*.) are present on the animal.

12 *Gear/debris retained:* Check YES if the gear was retained by a stranding network or NOAA enforcement official. Note the name and contact information if the gear was retained by anyone other than your organization. Check NO if the gear was not retained. Check NA if there was no gear/debris present on the animal.

13 *External pathology:* If the animal has any lesions that appear to be disease-related such as pox lesions, tattoo lesions, abscesses, or other unexplained lumps, bumps, or sores, check YES. Check NO if the animal has no disease-related lesions. Check CBD if you observe lesions and are unsure of their origin or if the integument is too degraded to assess.

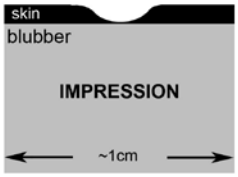
14 *Natural markings:* If the animal has any natural markings (*e.g*. tooth rakes, unusual pigmentation, any non-HI scars) check YES. If the natural marks hamper your examination, please note in the COMMENTS section. If there are no natural markings, check NO. If you cannot tell if there are any marks or are unsure of the origin of marks/scars check CBD.

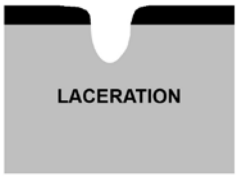
15 *HI lesions:* Note lesions that may be associated with human interaction (fresh or healed entanglement or propeller scars, gaff marks, gunshot, healed HI scars, brands, *etc*.). Check YES if any human interaction lesions are observed. Check NO if no other lesions are observed. Check CBD if you observe lesions and are unsure of their origin or if the integument is too degraded to assess. A detailed exam of these lesions will occur in the next section.

16 *Predation/scavenger damage:* If there is evidence of predation or scavenger damage, circle the number(s) that correspond to the anatomical areas where evidence is seen. If the area affected is not numbered, circle *#29*, and note the area in the table below (*e.g.* genital slit, umbilicus, tongue) and note details of the damage in *Comments.*

17-29 **DETAILED EXAM OF ANATOMICAL AREAS**– Use this table to record findings of all suspected or possible evidence of human interaction. This means that any mark that the observer believes is consistent with some type of HI should be noted here. In addition, any marks for which the source Could not Be Determined, but that do not appear natural, should also be recorded in this table. DO NOT RECORD INFORMATION ON NATURAL MARKINGS OR OTHER LESIONS IN THIS SPACE. Examine the animal carefully starting at the head and working caudally down the right, then left, side, finishing with the tail or flukes. For this section, indicate whether you observe any SIGNS OF HUMAN INTERACTION in each *anatomical area* by checking the YES, NO, or CBD column. If you were not able to examine an area, check NE, or if it does not apply to your animal, check NA. Be consistent; examine anatomical areas in the same order each time you do an exam.

TYPE OF LESION- If you checked YES or CBD in any area, proceed to the *Type of Lesion* section and check all columns that apply.





- An *IMPRESSION* is a compression wound that occurs when an object leaves an indentation but does not lacerate or abrade the skin/pelt. Impressions left by net or line usually wrap around the leading and/or trailing edges of a fin, flipper, or fluke. Impressions on the leading edge of an appendage may line up with a similar mark on the trailing edge.
- A *LACERATION* occurs when the skin/pelt is penetrated from tight constriction or prolonged compression. The skin tears resulting in a lesion. Net and line usually leave linear lacerations. These lacerations may be evenly spaced along an appendage, or bunched near the proximal end of appendages (indicating net) and may be accompanied by impressions. A laceration is different from an incision which is made by a sharp instrument such as a knife. In cross section, a laceration or impression has rounded or jagged edges indicating surface tissue damage.
- An *INCISION* has clean edges and results in little surface tissue damage (see image at right).
- A *PENETRATING WOUND* occurs when a foreign object punctures or deeply penetrates the body, and is generally characterized by a small external wound and a wound tract that extends deep into the tissue and often into the body cavity. Sources of penetrating wounds include gaff, knife stab, spear, arrow, gunshot (especially bullet), *etc.*
- A *HEALED HI SCAR* is similar to a natural scar in pigmentation, but exhibits similar characteristics to the other types of lesions described here (*e.g.* linear scars on leading edges of appendages consistent with entanglement, parallel scars consistent with prop strike, *etc.*). **Only check this column if the lesion is completely healed with no open tissue**. Healed scars may be pigmented and may feel different than surrounding tissue, but there should be no exposed flesh, discharge, or soft swelling if the wound is healed. Treat healing lesions the same as fresh lesions. Evidence of HI, even if healed and not likely associated with the stranding event, should still be scored positive (YES) for HI. It can be difficult to determine the origin of healed scars. If you are unsure of the origin, check CBD instead of YES in the first set of columns.
- An *ABRASION* occurs when gear or debris rubs an area and scrapes the skin/pelt without forming an obvious laceration or distinct impression. This often occurs with heavy line or twine entanglement or when loose or trailing ends of gear/debris rub (abrade) parts of the body.
- Choose *OTHER / CBD* for any other types of lesions and describe in the comments section.

ORIGIN OF LESION - Once you determine the type of lesion, move to the *Origin of Lesion* section and check all that apply.

LINE is made up of many individual strands (multifilament) and is large in diameter. It is used for moorings, towing, forms the float and lead line of nets, and attaches buoys and anchors.
TWINE is a small diameter line and can be multi- or mono- filament. Twine is constructed of various materials and is combined in different ways:

MONOFILAMENT twine – a single strand of nylon twine that leaves a single, straight, narrow impression or laceration (Figure 1, A).

MULTIFILAMENT – line or twine made up of multiple strands of material that are twisted or braided together and can leave a distinctive impression as a series of parallel, angled lines or ovals (Figure 1, B and C). If heavier twisted or braided line rubs on a body part or becomes tightly wrapped, it can cause an abrasion.

NET – nets can be made of either monofilament or multifilament twine and have various characteristics: twine diameter, square mesh size (knot to knot), and stretch mesh size (diagonal between opposite knots of a mesh with one knot between; Figure 2). Net impressions are often characterized by either a criss-cross pattern or a bunching of impressions with or without knot marks evident where lines intersect.

There are two parts to this section. First, we ask you to indicate what created the lesion, and if the lesion was related to gear, such as net, twine, or line. Second, we ask if you can determine whether the gear was monofilament or multifilament.
Based on the descriptions above, indicate the origin of the lesion:

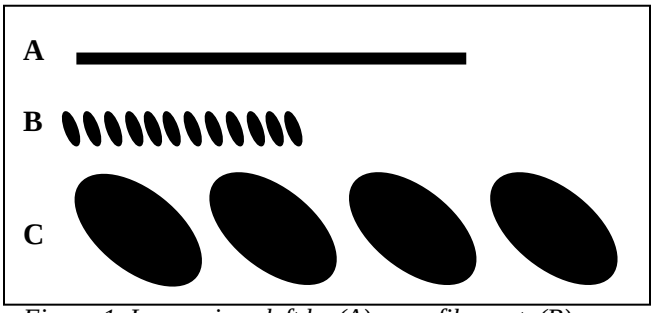


Figure 1. Impressions left by (A) monofilament, (B) twisted twine and (C) twisted line. Impressions are most visible on cetaceans.

- *Twine/Line* - select TWINE/LINE if the impression, laceration, or abrasion is consistent with the descriptions above, but is not indicative of interaction with a net.
- *Net* - select NET if the marks are consistent with the descriptions above. Nets made of monofilament may leave multiple impressions or lacerations, but each lesion is a straight furrow.
- *Other/CBD* - select this column if the marks appear consistent with entanglement or interaction with some type of gear, but you cannot determine which type.

If you checked *Twine/Line*, *Net, or Other/CBD,* indicate whether lesions were caused by *monofilament* or *multifilament* gear. Select *CBD* if you observe linear marks, but you are unsure of the origin.

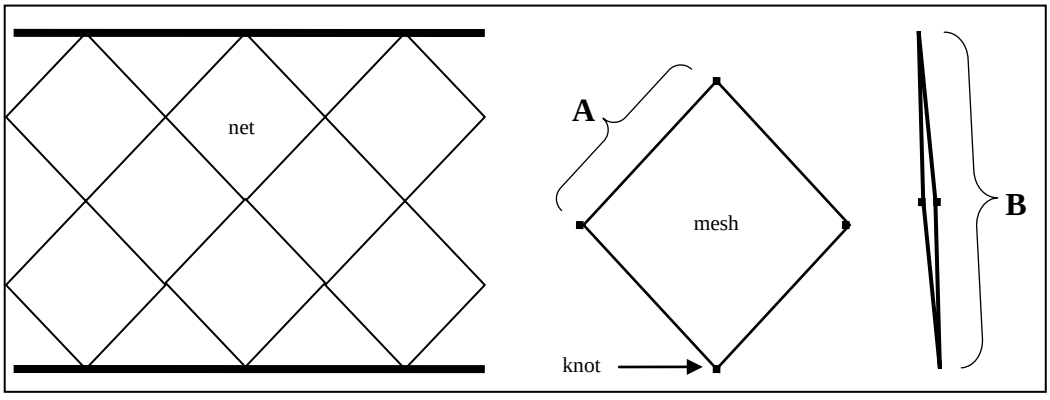


Figure 2. Typical net design. Nets are measured by the depth and length of the meshes hung between the top and bottom lines (float line and lead line on gill nets) and the horizontal length of the meshes. The mesh size can be measured from knot to knot (A) which is called the square *or* bar *mesh size or (B) at it's maximum diagonal width which is called a* stretch *mesh size.* Twine *size is the diameter of the twine the makes up the mesh.*

If the lesion you noted was not made by gear (line, net/twine), check the appropriate box to indicate the source:

- *Propellers* usually leave deep, roughly parallel lacerations (Figure 3). Lesions can be straight (A), Z or S-shaped (B), curved (C), or open in the middle with thin trails (not illustrated). Large propellers may bisect an animal.

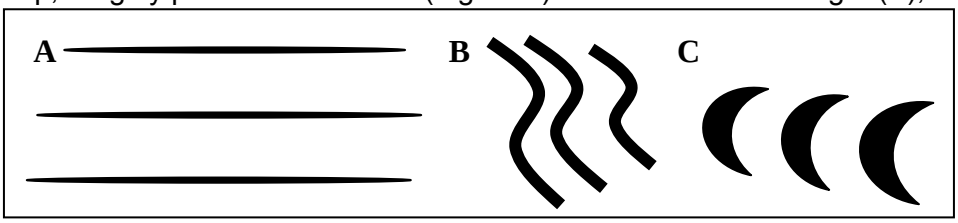


Figure 3. Types of propeller lesions left by different styles and sizes of propeller. The length, depth, and spacing between lesions can provide information as to the type of propeller and, thus, type of vessel.

- *Gunshot* wounds vary based on the weapon used (shotgun, rifle, hand gun) and the distance an animal is from the weapon. Gunshot wounds can be very difficult to identify through gross exam, but can be characterized by single (bullet) or multiple (pellet) puncture/penetrating wounds. Radiographs are often necessary to confirm the findings.
- *Other/CBD* - select this column for lesions with other origins including, gaff, arrow, and debris entanglement, *etc*. or if you are unsure of the origin of the lesion(s).

Every area that scores YES or CBD should have an IMAGE TAKEN that includes a label with identifying information (field number, date of stranding, species, examiner, subject of image, *etc*.) and a scale (small ruler or something of known size). If film or disk space is not limited, take pictures of all areas. Note Y (Yes) or N (No) in the IMAGE TAKEN column.

Every area that scores YES or CBD should have a comment associated with it. Number each COMMENT with the corresponding line number for that anatomical area.

If you find lesions in an area not listed in the Detailed Exam table, add it on line 29 and reference in the COMMENTS section.

Page 2:
FIELD # - Be sure to fill out the field number on both sides of all pages associated with this animal.

INTERNAL EXAM - An evaluation of a dead animal is not complete without a thorough necropsy (internal examination). Some forms of interaction are only evident through internal exam (*e.g.* ingestion of debris or gear) and a final interpretation may change if an animal with external evidence of HI is found to be suffering from disease, pregnancy complications, injuries, *etc*. Some observations support a diagnosis of HI (*e.g.* for fishery interactions - full stomach, froth in lungs) and others provide evidence for HI although nothing was noted externally (*e.g.* stomach full of man-made debris). Be sure to note the DATE of the internal exam in the INTERNAL EXAM box.

30 *Internal examination conducted* – If you were able to examine the entire animal, check YES. If you did not examine the animal internally, check NO. Check PARTIAL if you only examined part of the animal (*e.g.* abdominal cavity only), then describe in the *Comments* section what was examined.

31 *Bruising/blunt trauma* – Indicate if you see any focal area of bruising (discrete area, not diffuse along an entire body region). Note whether the area is associated with an external lesion. If it is not associated with a penetrating lesion or wound, it should be considered blunt trauma. If you check YES or CBD, note the size of the area and the tissue depth (*e.g*. sub-dermal to blubber, into muscle, through muscle and into mesenteries and organs) in the *Comments* section (do not confuse diffuse post-mortem blood pooling with bruising).

32 *Skeleton examined* – Check YES if the entire skeleton was examined. Check NO if no bones were examined. Check PARTIAL if only some of the skeletal elements were examined. If you check

PARTIAL, note in *Comments* section what was examined (*e.g.* examined skull, head, left ribs, and flipper, but not right side or vertebral column).

33 *Broken bones present* - Note whether you observed any broken bones.
Associated tissue reaction - Examine the tissue around the break(s) and circle whether any tissue reaction has occurred (hemorrhage, fibrous tissue, swelling at bone ends, *etc*.). If you are unsure, check CBD.

34 *Mouth/GI tract examined* - Check YES if the entire GI tract was examined. Check NO if none of the GI tract was examined. Check PARTIAL if only some elements of the GI tract were examined and note which areas were examined in the *Comments* section (*e.g*. stomach, but not intestines). Note in the *Detailed Info* column the predominant condition of the contents. Circle *debris*/gear if non-prey items (plastic, line, hooks, *etc.*) are found. Use the comments section to describe the region of the GI tract (*e.g.* esophagus, stomach chamber, intestine, or colon) and its contents (*e.g*. fish, squid, crabs, mussels, milk, plastic bag, unknown). Stranded animals with full stomachs are often suspect cases. Ingestion of gear or debris is considered a human interaction.

35 *Lungs/bronchi examined* - Check YES if both lungs were thoroughly examined. Check NO if the lungs were not examined. Check PARTIAL if you performed a partial examination and record in *Comments* section.

36 *Lungs/bronchi contents* - Circle all that apply in the *Detailed Info* column and describe the contents of each lung, including content volume, in the *Comments* section.

37 *Bullet/projectile found* – Check YES if you discovered any type of projectile (*e.g.* bullets, pellets, arrow heads, *etc*.) during the internal exam. Check NO if no projectiles were found. Check CBD if you are unsure of an object you have found. Indicate how the item was discovered in the *Detailed Info* section (CT scan, X-Ray, dissection) and indicate whether the object was collected. Note: it is important to follow Chain of Custody procedures when collecting this evidence. Provide details in the *Comments* section.

38 *Other lesions noted* - Note whether any other pathologies were observed, describe in *Comments* section.

39 **COMMENTS** – The details of what you observe are required in the section. Provide comments for each item for which you checked YES or CBD. When describing lesions, include measurements (*e.g*. length, width and depth, distance between lesions), location (*e.g.* measurement from nearest landmark – 20cm caudal of the right flipper), color, shape, and texture. Note the characteristics of the edges (*e.g.* jagged, straight, rounded) and the direction of linear lesions (*e.g*. wraps from leading edge of dorsal fin to trailing edge on left side). Number each set of comments using the corresponding line number for that row on the data sheet. Use extra pages if needed and be sure to note the animal's field number in the upper right margin. If this information is provided in the necropsy report or other data sheet, reference that material here.

40 **FINDINGS OF HUMAN INTERACTION** – Review your exam notes and check YES if you observed any signs of human interaction on the animal. Check NO if you thoroughly examined the animal and did not find any signs of human interaction. Check CBD if: (1) you did not examine the animal thoroughly, (2) decomposition or scavenger damage hampered the exam, or (3) you are unsure whether marks on the animal were caused by human interaction. This is an objective analysis. It does not take into account the animal's physical condition, the timing of the human interaction with respect to the stranding, or the circumstances surrounding the stranding. After determining the objective Findings of HI, select the EXAM TYPE you conducted. If you ONLY conducted an external exam, check EXTERNAL. If you conducted only an internal exam, check INTERNAL (although we are not sure when this would ever be the case, it is currently on the NOAA Level A form). If you conducted both external and internal exams, check BOTH. Note, even an external exam that is scored CBD due to decomposition or other factors is still considered an exam. In some cases, there may be a finding of CBD during the external exam, but YES during an internal exam (*e.g.* if the carcass lacked skin or pelt due to decomposition but the animal had ingested plastic).

TRANSFER THE ABOVE INFORMATION TO THE FINDINGS OF HUMAN INTERACTION SECTION ON THE LEVEL A DATA SHEET.

41 **Type of HI** - If you circle YES in line 40, indicate to the type(s) of human interaction that you observed.

Entanglement - occurs when there are lesions (such as linear impressions, lacerations, or circumferential lesions), or material on the animal consistent with entanglement.

- Choose *gear* as the type of entanglement if the lesions and/or gear removed strongly suggest fishing gear. Note that you cannot make assumptions about whether gear was actively fished, discarded, or 'ghost gear.' All should be checked as *gear*. Likewise, line alone, while used in fishing operations, is also used for many other applications and cannot be assumed to be fishing *gear* unless it has specific markings or attachments indicating it was used in a fishery. Examples of the latter include buoys, lead core line, and pots. Line of unknown origin should be marked as *CBD*, line obviously used for anchoring, mooring, or towing should be considered *debris.*
- Choose *debris* if the entangling material is not related to fishing gear. This includes material such as plastic bags or sheets, textiles such as clothing, rubber or latex, and metal. Line of unknown origin should be marked as *CBD*, and line obviously used for anchoring, mooring, or towing is considered *debris*.
- Choose *CBD* if you are unsure of the origin of the entangling material.

Hooking – occurs when a fishing hook (or lure) is imbedded on the body or in the mouth of an animal. If the hook or lure is in the throat or GI tract, it should be considered *ingested* gear.

- Choose *recreational* if the hook or lure is of a size or design that indicates it is strictly recreational gear (local tackle shops are often helpful for this).
- Choose *commercial* if the hook or gear is of a size or type, or is configured in such a way (such as a longline gangion) that indicates it is strictly commercial gear.
- Choose *CBD* if you cannot determine the origin of the gear or if it is used in both commercial and recreational fisheries.

Ingestion – occurs when an animal ingests a foreign object. Ingestion occurs if the object travels past the mouth and into the throat. If the object is a hook or lure, and it is in the mouth, the HI is *hooking*. If the object is line, twine or debris and it is tangled in mouth it is *entanglement*. Gear or debris must be ingested to fit this category.

- Choose *gear* if fishing gear such as a hook, lure, fishing twine, or net was ingested.
- Choose *debris* if plastic, metal, or other man-made debris was ingested.
- Choose *CBD* if you cannot determine the origin of the ingesta, but it is clearly man-made.

Gunshot - occurs when an animal is shot with a gun (handgun, shotgun, or rifle). Presence of one or more ballistic projectiles is the best way to diagnose a gunshot interaction. Wounds from other projectiles should be categorized under *CBD/Other*.

Vessel trauma - occurs when an animal is impacted by a vessel, usually through impact with the hull or propulsion system. The trauma can be 'sharp' trauma, such as that from a propeller, or 'blunt' trauma such as that from the bow of a ship, or a combination of the two.

- Choose *sharp* trauma if the external injury appears to be one or more roughly linear wounds with internal tissue damage associated with the chop or slice wounds.
- Choose *blunt* trauma if wounds, particularly broken bones and soft tissue damage, are more internal than external and are consistent with impact from a large object such as a vessel.
- Choose *both* if the wounds appear to be a combination of sharp and blunt trauma.

Mutilation – occurs when an animal or carcass is intentionally cut or sliced. Mutilation generally involves the use of some type of knife or blade and can result in several common types of wounds and amputations including body sliced, stabbed, or gutted or appendages removed.

Harassment – occurs when human activity changes the behavior of an animal. In this context, harassment occurs if the animal is harassed while it is in the process of stranding, is already stranded, or if the harassment results in a stranding. It is important to note that harassment is

common especially with hauled out pinnipeds and that not all harassment is associated with a stranding (*e.g.* feeding free-swimming animals is a form of HI, but not a stranding).
CBD/Other – occurs EITHER when non-natural lesions are on the animal, but it is unclear what type of human activity caused them OR when the type of HI is known, but is not specifically listed above such as vehicular trauma, a projectile other than gunshot (arrow or dart), oil or chemical spill, stabbing or clubbing, *etc*. Describe *Other HI* in the space provided.

42 **STRANDING EVENT HISTORY/CIRCUMSTANCES** – provide any information about the stranding event or circumstances surrounding the event that would be helpful in supporting the HI diagnosis (*i.e.* fishing, drilling, or other activities, oil spill, unusual mortality events, previous sightings of animal, unusual behavior prior to stranding, *etc*.). Note any objective details provided by the initial reporter, these may be answers to questions you have asked (*i.e*. Was there any blood in the water next to the animal? What did it look or smell like when you first observed it? How was the animal positioned (belly up, on its side) when you first observed it?).

If there is no physical evidence but harassment is suspected, objectively describe events in this section including names and contact numbers for witnesses and any authorities that were contacted.

43 **INITIAL HUMAN INTERACTION EVALUATION** – This section should be completed if you circled YES under *Findings of Human Interaction* (line #40). It should be completed after filling out the entire data sheet. This section is **subjective** and takes into account the animal's physical condition, gross necropsy findings, the timing of the human interaction with respect to the stranding, and the circumstances surrounding the stranding. **Most importantly, it takes into account the evaluator's level of experience. If you have not conducted many evaluations or are not familiar with the region, you may be unable to make an accurate evaluation and should conservatively circle CBD.** This section does not take into account results of level B and C analyses or review by veterinary pathologist which is why it is considered an **INITIAL** evaluation.

For this section, you are estimating how likely you think it is that the documented human interaction contributed to the stranding event. This opinion is expressed as a confidence interval on a scale of 0-3, as described below. Circle the most appropriate number. The higher the number, the more likely it is that the interaction contributed to the stranding. If you do not feel that you can provide an evaluation, circle 0 – Uncertain (CBD). [Note: We do not say that the human activity *caused* the stranding because the human interaction could have indirectly contributed to the event without being the direct cause of the stranding.]

0. *Uncertain (CBD)* - You cannot provide an evaluation of the likelihood that human interaction contributed to the stranding (*e.g.* a Code 4 carcass is found with propeller marks; it is too decomposed to determine whether the interaction was pre- or post-mortem).
1. *Improbable* - It is unlikely that the observed human interaction contributed to the stranding or there are other gross findings that suggest an alternative cause for the stranding (*e.g.* there are healed entanglement scars on the flukes of a known humpback whale that died with a full-term fetus; it is unlikely that the past entanglement contributed to the stranding).
2. *Suspect* – It is possible that human interaction contributed to the stranding, but the findings of HI are weak and/or there are other findings that may have caused the stranding (*e.g.* there is a small amount of plastic found in an animal's stomach, but you are unsure of its effect and the animal is very thin with a high parasite level. Did the plastic ingestion cause the animal's decline or was a declining animal eating anything it could get?).
3. *Probable* - It is very likely that human interaction contributed to the stranding (*e.g.* a robust animal with a full stomach, froth in the lungs, and marks that are consistent with entanglement and underwater entrapment).

44 **JUSTIFICATION** – Provide a brief justification of your answer for the *Initial Human Interaction Evaluation* score. Include information from all sources available to you.

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