

# The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston



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November 23, 1992

Graham Worthy, Ph.D  
Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network  
4700 Avenue U  
Galveston, Texas 77550

RE: Globicephala GA 419

Dear Dr. Worthy:

This will report to you my findings in the case of the Globicephala referenced above. My opinion is based on the gross autopsy examination and study of histologic slides prepared from the tissues. A summary of the gross autopsy findings attached. A detailed description of the histopathology is available.

It is hard to know exactly what was going on with this animal. The jaw was so firmly shut that it could not be opened until all the muscles had been cut. I could find no problem with the temporomandibular joints. There is also an unusual degree of contraction band necrosis of the skeletal muscle. In putting the two together, a reasonable guess is that this animal may have had tetanus. There was the large necrotic area at the tip of the beak, and we know from cultures of other animals that Clostridia are common in cetacea.

This is an immature animal. The testes are very immature; only sertoli cells and spermatogonia are present in the tubules. I understand that this animal is far off his range. This offers the prospect of a "distress stranding"; that is, it is an isolated member of a herding species, and may be disoriented. This explanation does not take into account the jaw and muscle findings.

In any event, I can find no reason to suspect human interaction related to this stranding. I would class it as a "natural" event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Cowan".

Daniel F. Cowan, M.D.  
Professor of Pathology

GA 419 Globicephala macrorhyncha. Immature male 310 cm: 324 kg (712 lb)

Collected January 6, 1992, 1.5 m west of San Luis Pass, Brazoria County.

This animal is way off his range. It is very lean.

External examination: A few skin markings; nothing impressive, except for a striking, deep ulceration of the extreme anterior rostrum and jaw. The mouth could not be opened at all. The muscles had to be cut away to open the mouth. The TM joints did not appear to be abnormal.

Internal examination: All organs are congested, but show no other abnormality. Intestines were distended with gas. The lungs seem normal, apart from white froth in the bronchi. No lungworms found. One pulmonary nodule sampled. Intestines were empty. Internal parasites not found.

General Impression from the gross examination: Thin, almost emaciated animal, with evidence of congestive heart failure. (Pulmonary edema, generalized congestion.) Jaw could not be opened. If this condition existed in life, it could explain weight loss and beaching.