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SP189 was a 233 cm, 151 kg female Tursiops who died entangled in a net about one mile off the west jetty at Sabine Pass, Jefferson County this past August. She was a young adult lactating female in prime external condition. SP190, who died entangled in the same net, a very young female, with teeth erupting on the top jaw, but not on the mandible, may have been the calf of SP189. Externally, both animals seemed to be healthy. The tongue of the older one was still papillated around the margin. Both were Code 2, and were brought to the Galveston laboratory by volunteers.

The findings in the two animals were quite different. In the adult, as might be expected in an accidental death, there were minimal internal findings. The only disease of note was foci of scarring in a kidney. There were a few old scars in both lungs. The air sinuses were a bit ulcerated, associated with fluke infestation. The stomach was very full of fish, and had several flukes (Braunina) in the second chamber. In the third chamber were lesions suggestive of worm egg deposition in the mucous membrane. The mammary glands very large and full. Milk easily expressed from the ducts.

There were signs of asphyxiation, rather than drowning, as there was foam in the lungs, but no water. This is common in immersion deaths, as the larynx goes into spasm, preventing aspiration of water.

The calf measured 138 cm long and weighed 43.8 kg. Her age was estimated to

be about 4 months. She showed some striking internal findings. There were very many large (2 cm) solid inflammatory nodules or abscesses in both lungs. Degenerating lungworm, including larval forms were present in these abscesses. There was also extensive atelectasis (collapse of the lungs).

and especially prominent in the large intestine.

Comment: We are used to finding disease in stranded animals, and we come to think that the disease we find causes the animal to strand. Cases like the two presented here are important because they give some insight into the disease that apparently normal functional animals can bear and still go about the business of living. We know the calf died in a net, presumably of drowning. Had she been found washed ashore, we might have attributed her stranding to her lung disease. She lets us know we have to be cautious about accepting easy answers. These two also will contribute important information about the amounts of toxins that animals can carry and still be healthy enough to be interested in feeding.

The calf is important in another way. The lung lesions are different from the ones we find in adults. They are all about the same stage of development, and are caused by gravid worms. Does this mean this animal was particularly susceptible to the worm because she was so young, and her immunity not well developed, or is this the usual pattern of first infestation? As these lesions age and scar, they would shrink, and probably come to look like the ordinary worm scars we are used to seeing. The opportunity to examine an accidental death like this one helps us to learn about the evolution of disease processes in dolphins.