ANIMAL WELFARE

Impact of naval sonar systems on sealife mortality

We understand that military naval exercises by France, Norway and the USA are to take place, or have already taken place, in Norwegian waters and the Mediterranean Sea. The use of military sonar is expected in the context of these navy operations.

A clear-cut relationship between exposure to high-intensity, mid-frequency waves released by military antisubmarine sonars and mass strandings and deaths of beaked whales (Ziphiidae) was demonstrated 20 years ago in the Canary Islands. In fact, following exposure to the stimuli from the sonar systems, the whales inhabiting those waters were shown to develop ‘gas and fat embolic syndrome’, a pathological condition resembling ‘decompression sickness’ in divers.1,2 Following a sonar ban in 2004, no more mass strandings of beaked whales have occurred in the Canary Islands during the past 20 years,3 which means life and peace for these iconic and increasingly threatened sea creatures.

As such, we feel the need to express our most serious concern about the deleterious effects of military sonar devices on cetacean species and populations living in the geographical areas where naval operations will be carried out.

Antonio Fernandez, professor of veterinary pathology and histology
email: antonio.fernandez@ulpgc.es
Paul D Jepson, honorary senior scientist
Institute of Animal Health, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Arucas, Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, Spain
Giovanni Di Guardo, retired professor of general pathology and veterinary pathophysiology
Viale Pasteur, 77,01144, Rome, Italy

References

LETTERS & NOTICES

We feel the need to express our most serious concern about the deleterious effects of military sonar devices on cetacean species

DEATH NOTICES

Campbell On 8 March 2022, Allan Campbell, BVMS, DVM, MRCVS, of Edinburgh. Mr Campbell qualified from Glasgow in 1954.

Downie On 22 December 2019, James Grant Downie, BVM&S, BSc, PhD, MRCVS, of Auldearn, Nairn. Dr Downie qualified from Edinburgh in 1960.

Holmes On 29 July 2021, Ian Peter Holmes, BVS, MRCVS, of Manukau City, New Zealand. Mr Holmes qualified from Massey in 1985.

Reidy On 23 March 2022, John Conor Reidy, MVB, MRCVS, of Slane, County Meath, Ireland. Mr Reidy qualified from NUI in 1967.

Stirling On 15 November 2021, Lindsay Robertson Stirling, MRCVS, of Whitney, Oxfordshire. Mr Stirling qualified from Edinburgh in 1949.

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