

*ERYSIPELOTHRIX RHUSIOPATHIAE* INFECTION IN STRANDED HARBOUR PORPOISE (*Phocoena phocoena*) AND HARBOUR SEAL (*Phoca vitulina*).

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Abstract :

An adult female harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) and a juvenile male harbour seal have been found dead on a Belgian beach in autumn 2001. The two bodies were in good condition. Pure and abundant growth of a small rod-shaped, Gram-labile bacterium was obtained aerobically and anaerobically on Columbia blood-agar from the heart blood, the mouth, the pharynx, the lungs, the intestine and the anus of the porpoise, and from the intestine, the pharynx, the mouth, the nose and the anus of the seal. The colonies were surrounded by a narrow zone of alpha-hemolysis. The catalase- and peroxydase-tests gave negative results.

Rapid ID 32 Strepto (Biomérieux, France) sugar tests applied on porpoise's heart blood, lungs and intestine, and on seal's intestine and pharynx identified this isolate to *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae*.

*E.rhusiopathiae* is not reported as a common cause of infection and death in wild cetaceans and wild pinnipeds in opposite to respectively captive dolphins and sea lions.

Nevertheless, *E.rhusiopathiae* can be considered as the cause of death of the stranded harbour porpoise as it was present in heart blood and internal organs, and the seal was carrying the bacterium with lesions of enteritis which could be associated with *E.rhusiopathiae*.