



MINISTRY OF BLUE ECONOMY, MARINE RESOURCES, FISHERIES AND SHIPPING
Preliminary autopsy report with regard to the discovery of dead dolphins in the South East Coast of Mauritius

August 28, 2020

This report provides an update on the established facts with regards to the electra dolphins recovered in the South East Coast of Mauritius over the past three days.

- On Wednesday 26 August 2020, at 6.00 pm local time, two (2) of the 18 bodies of the deceased electra dolphins (also known as melon-headed whales) found on the coast in the area between Pointe-aux-Feuilles and Grand-Sable were autopsied.
- Initial results do not indicate that these animals succumbed to the effects of the fuel spill following the running aground of the MV Wakashio
- On Thursday morning, August 27, 2020, eight (8) additional dolphins of the same species were discovered in the lagoon of Bois-des-Amourettes and Pointe-aux-Feuilles. Another one was recovered in a state of decomposition in the same area.
- On Friday, 28 August 2020, ten (10) more Electra dolphins were found dead in the lagoon of Grand Sable and Pointe aux Feuilles.
- In total, 37 animals have been found dead in the lagoon of the South East region during the past three days.

Since the sad discovery of these 18 dolphin corpses on the morning of Wednesday 26th August, the Ministry of Fisheries, in collaboration with the Mauritius Marine Conservation Society, the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and the Mauritius Scuba Diving Association, has initiated appropriate protocols to determine the cause of death of these marine mammals. The investigation is being conducted at the Albion Research Centre. A veterinarian from La Reunion, specialised in marine mammals, has attended the initial autopsies via videoconference.

Preliminary results indicate that the bodies of these animals show no traces of hydrocarbons, either in the respiratory system, skin, mouth or digestive tract. The stomachs of the autopsied marine mammals were empty, but the animals had serious injuries to their jaws. Pieces of fat and skin were taken for further analysis, including DNA tests.

The investigation continued today to examine the remaining carcasses. The preliminary autopsy report found that:

1. Bite wounds were observed on most of the carcasses, with several missing body parts.
2. No atypical odour could be detected emanating from the skin of the carcasses. Or oral cavities. No foreign matter was detected.
3. No fluid was found in the thoracic and abdominal cavities.
4. Dissected intestines were found to be empty.
5. In three of the carcasses, several worms were found in the lungs and heart

The dolphin carcasses found on Thursday morning were sent to Réduit for autopsy by the veterinary surgeon of the Ministry of Agro-industry.

All animals found on Thursday and Friday will undergo post-mortem exercise at the Government Veterinary Service of Mauritius at Réduit.

All samples taken will be subject to further bacteriological and toxicological analyses. The toxicological analysis will be carried out at the Forensic Science Laboratory. The results are expected in the coming days and will be made available as soon as possible.

**Ministry of Blue Economy,
Marine Resources,
Fisheries and shipping,
28 August 2020**

