

Agenda Item 14.3.3

Implementation of the ASCOBANS Triennial
Work Plan (2007-2009)

Review of New Information on Bycatch and
Other Causes of Mortality

Post-mortem and Stranding Schemes

Document 18

**Information Submitted by Parties in
Response to the Post-Mortem
Research Questionnaire
d) Belgium**

Action Requested

- take note of the information submitted
- comment
- decide on the reporting format and frequency
for future meetings

Submitted by

Parties



NOTE:
**IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR OWN
COPIES OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING**

Secretariat's Note

Attached are, as separate documents in order to minimise the need for revisions, the responses received on the Post-Mortem Research Questionnaire, as submitted by the ASCOBANS Parties.

Questionnaire on post mortem research schemes within the ASCOBANS Agreement area

Answers provided by BELGIUM

Name and address of reporting institution	Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences, Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models, Gulledele 100, 1200 Brussels, Belgium
Name of respondent	Thierry Jauniaux & Jan Haelters
What data are recorded routinely?	In addition to location and place of the stranding, all biological (species, age, sex,...) and pathological data (lesion description, cause of death,..) are recorded.
Description of methods and units of measurement used	Adapted protocol based on: Kuiken, T. & García Hartmann, M. (1991). Proceedings of the first European Cetacean Society workshop on cetacean pathology: dissection techniques and tissue sampling. ECS Newsletter, No. 17, Special Issue. Measurements are in the metric system.
List of tissue samples usually taken	<u>Histopathology</u> : eye, skin, liver, lymph nodes, gonad, reproductive tract, oesophagus, stomach, intestine, kidney, urinary bladder, pancreas, lung, heart, thyroid, thymus, brain and all tissues with lesions. <u>Virology and bacteriology</u> : blood, spleen, liver, kidney, lung, lymph node and all lesions. <u>Toxicology (organic pollutants and heavy metals)</u> : blubber, muscle, kidney and liver. <u>Genetics</u> : skin. <u>Age determination</u> : 4 teeth. <u>Diet</u> : blubber and stomach content.
How are the samples preserved?	Samples are fixed in formalin (histology), frozen at -20°C (toxicology, virology, diet,...) or fixed in ethanol (parasites, genetics) and all samples are stored for the Belgian Marine Mammal Tissue Bank.
How are carcasses disposed of?	Routinely, the remains of the carcass after necropsy are destroyed in a carcass disposal plant. In some cases carcasses are not collected due to an advanced stage of decomposition; these are being taken to a disposal facility by the local community. Occasionally skeletons are preserved after necropsy.
Are data recorded in a computer database? Please describe	First of all, all strandings data are recorded in an Access database. For those carcasses being necropsied, individual necropsy reports are being written (paper and word files). All necropsy data are recorded in a database, which includes for every animal the species, necropsy codes, stranding location, date and country (Belgium, France or the Netherlands), sex, age, body weight, body length, blubber thickness, conservation code (1 to 5), stomach content (empty or alimentary: otolithes, fresh prey), lesions, cause of death. The contents are transferred to a central database (Oracle) containing a diversity of marine information, managed by the Belgian Marine Data Centre. Organic pollutants and heavy metals (blubber, muscle, kidney and liver) are also imported in the marine environmental database.
How many data sets (by species) do you have?	This is highly dependent on the species: hundreds for harbour porpoises, approximately 10 for white-beaked dolphin, and only a few for animals rare in the southern North Sea such as common dolphin, white-sided dolphin and Sowerby's beaked whale.

Which computer software is used?	Microsoft Office Word, Excel, Access, Oracle
Do you foresee any problems (e.g. regarding intellectual property rights etc.) related to a central database?	There is no problem for submitting data in a digital format if these have been published. For practical reasons, data submission requirements should be standardised. An agreement must exist between the provider of the information and the user of the information. In addition, a “traceability” system should be provided to know who is using the data and how. Finally, an annual report concerning all data submitted should be provided.
What advantages would you expect from a central database?	A central database would be very helpful, but its success would depend to a large extent on the information provided and the rapidity of collaborators to provide data. An online access could be helpful to follow sightings or strandings on an ad hoc basis, and be useful for the organization of the stranding network (event anticipation concept).
Additional Information (e.g. website addresses)	<p>Strandings and unusual sightings along the Belgian and northern French coastline can be consulted online at: http://www.mumm.ac.be/EN/Management/Nature/search_strandings.php</p> <p>Data are entered very shortly after the stranding or sighting event (usually on the same day as the event).</p> <p>An online information system concerning the samples in a tissue bank is under construction.</p> <p>The marine environmental database is accessible via http://www.mumm.ac.be/datacentre.</p>