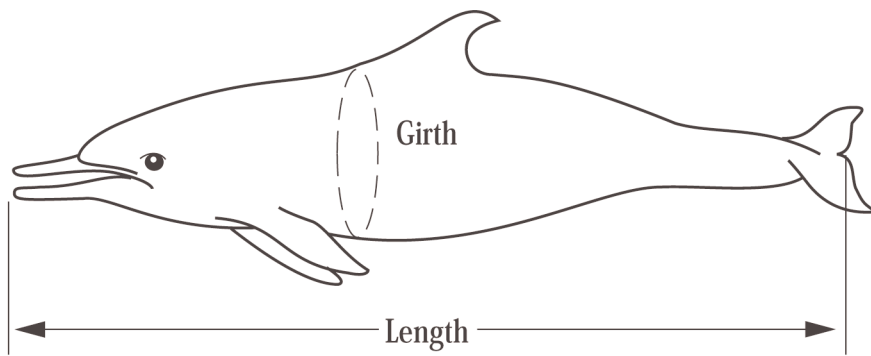


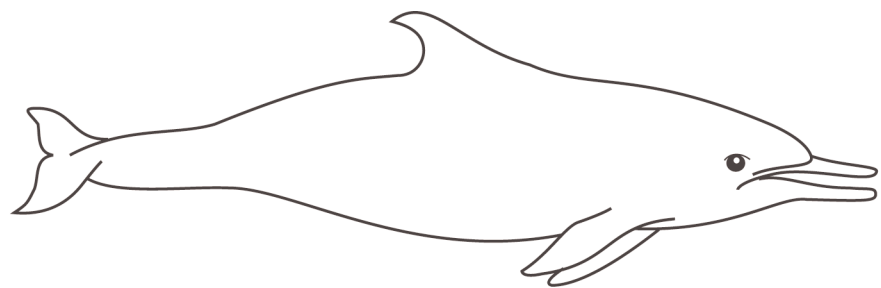
# Sketch appearance of animal, including traumatic lesions, skin damage, etc.

Indicate depth of lesions (through skin/blubber/muscle). Please also describe any other abnormalities seen, e.g. scoliosis, pectoral flipper dislocation and any identifying features for the animal. *Positions for length and girth measurements are given on the diagram below.*



Any photos taken? Yes  No

If yes, please send in copies with this report if possible



## Explanatory notes

### How long stranded

Important in determining prognosis, due to insidious onset of shock and muscle damage with time after stranding.

### Species identification#

Use RSPCA booklet, Sea Watch identification guide or British Divers handbook

### Sex

Check if lying on side; females; anus is close to or at back of genital slit and may see mammary slits on either side; in males, gap between anus and genital slit is greater and there are no mammary slits.

### Lying position

If the animal has been lying on its side for some time this may lead to pooling of blood on one side which can increase the likelihood of muscle and organ damage and disturb the animal's equilibrium.

### Breathing Rate

Count openings of the blowhole over several minutes in large animals. Normal rates - dolphins/porpoises: 2-5 breaths/min., pilot whales: approx. 1 breath/min.. Elevated with stress and respiratory disease. With stress, rates may rise markedly, but should fall when stress factor is removed. In small cetaceans, rates that remain above 10/min. for prolonged periods are indicative of a poor prognosis.

### Significant gap between breathing out and breathing in?

Normal breathing pattern consists of periods of breath holding, ended by a forceful breathing out immediately followed by breathing in. A prolonged gap between breathing out and in may be seen with pneumonia or the onset of shock.

### Heart rate

Beats can be felt in animals up to 8 metres in length, behind base of pectoral flipper. N.B. Rate varies with breathing cycle.

### Reflexes/muscle tone

May give an indication of level of consciousness in depressed animal. *Jaw tone*: should resist opening of mouth. *Palpebral (eyelid) reflex*: should close eye when gently touched on corner of eyelid. *Pupillary reflex*: should constrict pupil

in bright sunlight/torchlight after shading eye for 20 secs. *Menace response*: eye should blink and withdraw into socket when flat of hand is moved rapidly towards open eye. *Vestibulo-Ocular response (VOR)*: compensatory rotational movements of eyes should occur when animal is rocked slowly and gently from side to side. *Corneal reflex*: eye should blink when clean seawater at ambient temperature is gently squirted from a syringe onto eye (only do if no response to other reflexes). Poor reflexes and muscle tone may occur with shock and a decreased level of consciousness, and are a poor prognostic sign.

### Skin condition

Deteriorates once out of water, due to effects of sun and wind; excessive skin loss is associated with a poor prognosis.

### Capillary refill time

Press firmly on gums and record the time taken for the pink colour to reappear, i.e. for blood to return. Gives an indication of how well the circulation is working. Normally less than 2 seconds

### Mucous membranes colour

Easiest to check gum colour. If pale may be anaemic, or because going into dive reflex (when will usually also breath hold), which may be triggered when handled; if dark red, could be toxæmic, or due to local irritation.

### Skin tone

A sponginess or loss of tone, when hands are pressed against the animal's flanks, may be consistent with dehydration.

### Auscultation

Lungs - cranial and ventral to dorsal fin; may reveal moist rales and emphysema, although complicated by forceful, noisy lung sounds with normal respiration. Heart - between pectoral flippers in cetaceans <3 metres; may reveal murmurs.

### Any discharges present?

Excessive bleeding from blowhole, mouth, anus or mucoid, pussy blowhole discharge are poor prognostic signs.

### Body temperature

In animals <50kg, use standard digital

thermometer; in animals >50kg, use a flexible probe, 20-30cm long or a sealed digital thermometer securely attached to a stomach tube. Normal range: 36-37.5°C; over 42°C is likely to be terminal.

### Body condition

Animals in poor condition are not candidates for refloating. This may also be the case for animals in moderate condition, particularly for harbour porpoises in winter. Interpret lumbar muscle profile with care; profile may be distorted when beached and animals in good bodily condition may be suffering from severe, acute illness.

### Trauma, lesions and skin damage

Superficial trauma, often occurring during stranding, generally is not clinically significant, despite often heavy bleeding. Deeper wounds, penetrating the muscle layer will affect prognosis. Fractures and dislocations also affect prognosis, but may be difficult to detect. The stranding event itself can cause significant muscle damage, which may not be clinically apparent. The animal's behaviour in water (see below) may indicate degree of damage that has occurred. Checking blood samples for raised muscle enzyme levels also may help with determining prognosis.

### Eyes

Surface (cornea) often damaged on stranding, but this should not affect the prognosis. An animal that closes its eyes during the course of a stranding may be lapsing into shock or a decreased level of consciousness.

### Any refloat attempts made?

Important to determine if animal has already been pushed back into the sea. A hastily carried out refloat often leads to an animal restranding, may partially explain the animal's condition on assessment, and affect its prognosis.

### Behaviour in water, on refloating

Careful monitoring of behaviour and response to being refloated is important part of assessment. Abnormal behaviour includes uncoordinated movements - twitching and tremors - and pronounced flexion/curving of trunk. Disorientation, listing, muscle stiffness and an inability to swim are not initially poor signs, as these can take several hours to correct.

