

Post-mortem monitoring of harbour seals

Projectdata

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Project description

The harbour seal is the most common seal species in the Wadden Sea of Schleswig-Holstein. The seal population was substantially reduced in 1988/89 and 2002 by two seal epidemics caused by the Phocine distemper virus. Subsequent to the first seal die-off, a monitoring program was initiated, aiming to provide information on the diseases and causes of death of harbour seals, as well as to document the changes in the occurrence of infectious agents.

As part of this monitoring program seals are transported from the coast to the Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research. Animals are weighed and measured. A detailed necropsy is performed, and samples for further histological, microbiological, virological, serological, parasitological and toxicological investigations are taken and preserved. Furthermore, material for research on the age, reproductive status, nutrition analyses is saved. The investigations are performed in collaboration with other institutes of the Veterinary School of Hannover, Justus-Liebig-University Gießen and the state laboratory of Schleswig-Holstein.



Harbour seal with swallowed fishing hooks
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Harbour seal entangled in fishing gear ©
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