

Virus confirmed as cause of dolphin deaths

April 26 2013

University of Adelaide veterinary pathologists have confirmed that a marine virus not previously reported in South Australia has been found in dead dolphins found washed up on the state's beaches.

Veterinary pathologist Dr Lucy Woolford, working within Roseworthy Campus' new Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, said they have identified dolphin [morbillivirus](#) and systemic [fungal infection](#) as the cause of the recent death of two juvenile dolphins.

Working with the Australian [Marine Wildlife](#) Research and Rescue Operation (AMWRRO), Dr Woolford has been investigating the deaths which have caused community concern. Over recent weeks 25 deceased juvenile dolphins have been found.

"This is the first report of dolphin morbillivirus (DMV) in South Australia," says Dr Woolford.

"They have emerged as potent pathogens marine mammals and this does raise some concern that more animals will be affected within South Australia in coming months.

"We don't know how big an impact it will have on the local dolphin population, whether it will be sporadic cases or become more widespread."

Dr Woolford conducted post-mortems on the dolphins with the help of AMWRRO and assistance from [Biosecurity](#) SA, and the pathology

results have now been confirmed.

DMV has been previously implicated in the death of juvenile dolphins in Queensland, northern NSW and Western Australia and, overseas, the virus has been thought to be the cause of die-offs of whales and dolphins.

The results of these findings have been provided to the recent task force set up by the State Government.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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