

# Mystic Aquarium requests to resume research; whale improving

September 1 2021, by Pat Eaton-Robb

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A beluga whale is lifted from a transport truck after arriving at Mystic Aquarium, May 15, 2021 in Mystic, Conn. The aquarium says that a second of the five beluga whales it imported in May from a marine park in Canada is in failing health. The revelation comes three weeks after a male beluga, who was also part of the group that arrived from Marineland in Niagara Falls, died. Credit: Jason DeCrow/AP Images for Mystic Aquarium, File

Officials at Mystic Aquarium are asking that they be allowed to resume research on four beluga whales, which was halted following the death of the fifth whale imported this spring from Canada.

The request is part of [a three-page report](#) made public Monday by the National Marine Fisheries Service detailing the Aug. 6 death of a male whale known as Havok.

The report was posted at the same time the aquarium issued a public statement that a female whale named Jetta, reported to be gravely ill last week, is improving and being watched closely.

"While it is too early to be optimistic, there have been incremental improvements in the whale's white blood count, overall gastric [health](#), appetite, and stabilization of her weight," said Stephen Coan, the aquarium's president and chief executive officer. "We are by no means out of the woods and we have a long way to go before we can say there has been a significant recovery."

Coan said the aquarium has flown in experts from around the country to assist in the treatment of Jetta.

It is not yet known if Jetta's condition is related to those that [caused the death of Havok](#), who was found, Coan said, to have gastric ulcers and other pre-existing problems, including a deformed heart. A cause of death has not been determined.



ARCHIVO - Tres belugas nadan en una piscina de aclimatación tras arribar al Mystic Aquarium el 14 de mayo del 2021 en Mystic, Connecticut. Credit: Jason DeCrow/AP Images por Mystic Aquarium

"As this was an isolated health event and in no way related to the research being conducted, we respectfully ask for permission to resume research sampling on the other animals listed on the permit to accomplish our important research goals," Mystic said in its report to NMFS, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Jetta and Havok were a mong five whales imported in May from Marineland in Niagara Falls, Ontario to Mystic, which specializes in beluga research. The aquarium plans to study them and use blood, saliva and other [biological samples](#) to help it better understand the health of

whales in the wild.

The aquarium said in its report that Havok's death was not caused by that research.

"This case was an unpredictable health issue in an animal that had been cleared by qualified veterinarians in Canada to transport," the [aquarium](#) said in its report, which was submitted to NOAA on Aug. 17, before Jetta was found to be ill. "We have, and will continue to, ensure that medical conditions in one whale do not pose risk to the others. This case has no impact on the health of our other [animals](#)."

NOAA spokesperson Kate Brogan said the agency is working closely with the federal Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to review Mystic's report.



ARCHIVO - En esta fotografía de archivo del viernes 14 de mayo de 2021, entrenadoras del Mystic Aquarium juegan con una ballena beluga en Mystic, Connecticut. Credit: AP Foto/Jessica Hill, archivo

Connecticut-based Friends of Animals and other activists unsuccessfully sought to block the transport of the whales in a lawsuit last fall.

Steven Hernick, an attorney for Friends of Animals said Tuesday they are considering further [legal action](#) if they determine it could help the belugas at Mystic or "prevent future transports like this one."

Naomi Rose, a scientist with the Animal Welfare Institute, which was not part of the lawsuit, said she would oppose the resumption of research at Mystic until both NOAA and the the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service complete a thorough assessment of the health of the remaining [whales](#).

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