

Rescued walrus calf that was receiving cuddles as part of his care in Alaska dies

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In this photo provided by the Alaska SeaLife Center, a Pacific walrus pup rests his head on the lap of a staff member after being admitted to the center's Wildlife Response Program in Seward, Alaska, on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023. A walrus calf found on its own miles from the ocean on Alaska's North Slope last week and who received cuddles as part of his care after being rescued died on Friday, Aug. 11, 2023. Credit: Kaiti Grant/Alaska SeaLife Center via AP, File

A walrus calf found on its own miles from the ocean on Alaska's North Slope last week and who received cuddles as part of his care after being rescued died on Friday.

"While often rewarding, wildlife rescue is inherently unpredictable and comes with it the possibility of great loss. For those that dedicate their lives to animal care, this is the hardest part of the job," the Alaska SeaLife Center, the nonprofit research facility and public aquarium that was caring for him, said in a statement online.

The Pacific walrus [calf](#), taken in by the center on Aug. 1 after being found by oil field workers a day earlier, was struggling with a number of health issues, such as nutrient malabsorption. In the day before his death, he faced other complications, such as hypoglycemia and gastrointestinal problems, the center said.

"Though our animal care teams worked tirelessly to provide round-the-clock critical care treatments, never leaving his side, the calf ultimately succumbed to his condition," the center said. A necropsy is planned.

The brown, wrinkly-skinned baby was believed to be about one-month old. The center last week said that in an effort to mimic the near-constant care a calf would get from its mom, the walrus was receiving "round the clock 'cuddling'" to keep him calm and to aid in his development. The center described the cuddling as trained staff giving the walrus "the option to have a warm body to lean up against, which he has been taking advantage of almost constantly."

The range of the Pacific walrus includes the northern Bering and Chukchi seas, but the walruses are occasionally observed in areas like the Beaufort Sea to the northeast, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

The calf was found about 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) inland from the Beaufort Sea, in Alaska's extreme north. A "walrus trail," or track, was seen on the tundra near a road where the [walrus](#) was found. But it was unclear how, exactly, he got there, the center has said.

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