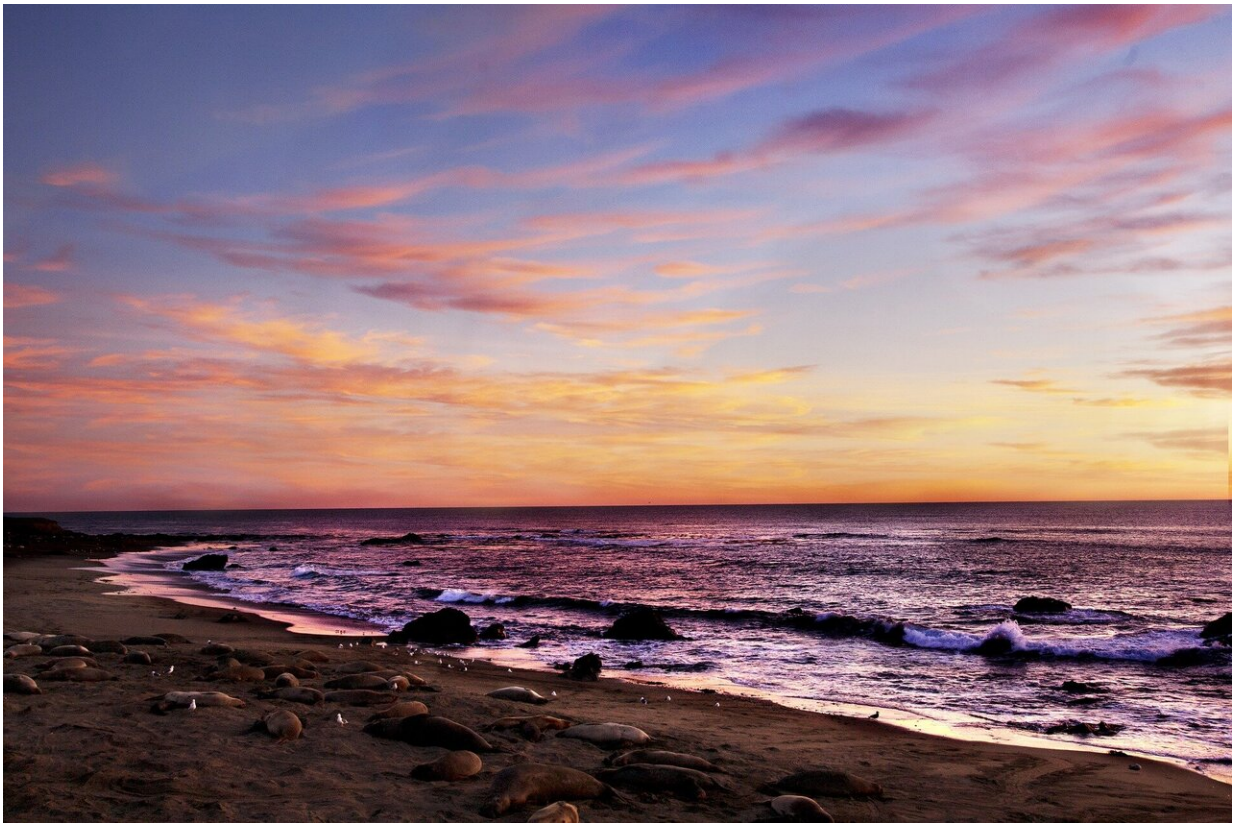


# Walrus dies from bird flu on Arctic island: Researcher

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The first case of a walrus dying from bird flu has been detected on one of Norway's Arctic islands, a researcher said Monday.

The [walrus](#) was found last year on Hopen island in the Svalbard archipelago, Christian Lydersen, of the Norwegian Polar Institute, told AFP.

Tests carried out by a German laboratory revealed the presence of [bird flu](#), Lydersen said. The sample was too small to determine whether it was the H5N1 or the H5N8 strain.

"It is the first time that bird flu has been recorded in a walrus," Lydersen said.

About six dead walrus were found last year in the Svalbard islands, about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the North Pole and halfway between mainland Norway and the North Pole.

Lydersen said it was "not improbable" that some of them had the bird flu.

Walrus, which can grow to a weight of two tonnes, eat mainly fish and shellfish, but sometimes also consume [marine birds](#).

Lydersen said it was important to monitor developments as walrus tend to group together in summer months when the ice flow melts.

There could also be a risk from a polar bear eating an infected walrus corpse.

Bird flu has taken a growing toll on farm animals since 2020.

It has already killed one [polar bear](#) in Alaska, according to US authorities. Thousands of marine mammals have died from bird flu viruses in South America, according to Antarctic researchers.

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