

Sea lion disease outbreak along Oregon coast

October 28, 2022



There is an increase in the number of stranded California sea lions along the entire Oregon coast due to leptospirosis, a naturally-occurring bacteria that can also sicken dogs, people, other wildlife, and livestock.

Dogs are most at risk of getting the disease while the risk to people is small. Dog and horse owners should discuss the merits of vaccination for leptospirosis with their veterinarian. ODFW and Oregon Parks and Recreation urge beachgoers to leash their dogs and keep at least 150 feet away from live or dead sea lions.

The disease can spread when an animal or person is in contact with urine or other bodily fluids of an infected or dead sea lion.

Leptospirosis outbreaks occur sporadically in marine mammals. Outbreaks can result in increased strandings and mortalities among sea lions. The Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network documented over 150 sick or dead sea lions along the Oregon coast since the current outbreak began in late July 2022. Necropsies on seven sea lions confirmed all tested positive for leptospirosis.

Sick or injured seals, sea lions, whales or dolphins can be reported to OSP at 1-800-452-7888.

All marine mammals are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and it is a violation of federal and state laws to harass, touch, or feed marine mammals. Marine mammals on the beach are often just resting or are sick and should be left alone.

For more information on leptospirosis, visit ODFW's fact sheet or the Center for Disease Control website. For more information on wildlife diseases, contact ODFW's wildlife health hotline at 1-866-968-2600.