This program enables NMFS to determine current status on concentrations of chemical contaminants, biotoxins, biochemical components, and health in marine mammals. Information is needed to determine trends related to the health of marine mammals and their ecosystems.

National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank

The ***National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank (NMMTB)*** was established in 1991 and is maintained as part of the National Biomonitoring Specimen Bank at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey and NMFS. In 1992, the NMMTB was merged with the already established Alaska Marine Mammal Tissue Archival Project.

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Marine mammal species that are representative of a specific geographic area or trophic level have been selected in each region of the U.S. to serve as indicators of the overall health of the marine mammal populations and ecosystems in that area. Specimens are archived from these representative marine mammal species, endangered species, and animals involved in unusual mortality events. Samples are collected from beach-stranded animals, and animals in capture/release programs, as well as those killed in subsistence hunts or as a result of human interaction.

Analytical Quality Assurance

The ***Analytical Quality Assurance (AQA)*** component was designed to ensure the accuracy, precision, level of detection, and intercompatibility of data resulting from chemical analyses of marine mammal tissue samples. This program's quality standards are applied to analyses of samples from all components of the program.

The ***AQA*** consists of:

1) Interlaboratory comparisons related to marine mammal tissue analysis

2) Preparation, analysis, and distribution of marine mammal tissue control materials

3) Development of Standard Reference Materials (SRMs) for use in the analysis of marine mammal tissues

Interlaboratory comparisons are performed between national and international laboratories that choose to participate. These laboratories are provided with control materials and can purchase SRMs from NIST for internal analyses of samples.

Several field guides and related publications have been developed by the Office of Protected Resources to assist stranding network members in the collection of specimens and data from stranded marine mammals. For more information or to request MMHSRP publications, please contact:

NOAA/NMFS/FPR-2
ATTN. MMHSRP
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 713-2322

web site: http://kingfish.ssp.nmfs.gov/tmcintyr/prot_res.html

Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program

Photo by William McClellan

NMFS file photo

Courtesy of Dolphin Biology Research Institute