

Deadly bacteria affecting local sea lions

Oregon and California are seeing an increase in the number of stranded sea lions along the coast due to leptospirosis, bacteria that can sicken dogs, livestock, people and other wildlife.

“Over the past few months, we have been getting calls for multiple sick or dead sea lions daily, which is higher than normal,” said Jim Rice, a researcher with the Oregon State University Marine Mammal Institute.

At least eight cases of leptospirosis have been confirmed through OSU’s Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory since the outbreak began in late September, mostly on beaches in Clatsop, Tillamook and Lincoln counties.

While leptospirosis occurs worldwide, outbreaks occur sporadically in marine mammals, with the last Oregon outbreak in 2010.

The disease can spread when an animal comes in contact with urine or other bodily fluids of an infected animal and can lead to kidney failure, fever, weakness, muscle pain and other symptoms. In Oregon, young male sea lions are typically affected and usually show signs of dehydration, depression and reluctance to use their hind flippers.

While there is a small risk of transmission to people, dogs are most at risk of becoming infected by approaching stranded sea lions on the beach or coming in contact with body fluid from sick or dead sea lions. People walking their dogs on the beach should keep their dogs on a leash and not allow them to get close to stranded sea lions.

“Pets should be kept away from sea lions as leptospirosis can cause severe disease,” said Emilio DeBess, state public health veterinarian of



A sea lion stakes its claim on a dock at the Skipanon Marina. Cindy Yingst/The Columbia Press

the Oregon Health Authority. “If your dog becomes ill after being exposed to sick or dead sea lions, contact your veterinarian immediately.”

There are vaccines available to protect dogs and horses against leptospirosis.

People who observe sick sea lions or other marine mammals on the beach should stay at least 50 feet away and report them to the Oregon

State Police at 800-452-7888. (OSP shares reports with the Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network.)

Even when sea lions are healthy, it’s never a good idea to approach them. It’s a violation of federal and state laws to harass, disturb, touch or feed marine mammals.

For more information, call ODFW’s wildlife health hotline at 866-968-2600.

College Board member honored

Rosemary Baker-Monaghan, who has served on the Clatsop Community College Board since 2000, has been named Outstanding Board Member by the Oregon Community College Association.

Baker-Monaghan was lauded by college President Chris Breitmeyer as an outstanding leader, campus diversity champion and passionate advocate for classroom security and campus safety.

In addition to the college board, she has served on Clatsop Economic Development Resources, or CEDR, the Lewis and Clark Na-

tional Park Association and is a former president of the Astoria Rotary Club.



Baker-Monaghan

Currently serving her fourth elected four-year term, Baker-Monaghan represents Zone 3, which includes Warrenton, Gearhart, Seaside, Cannon Beach and Arch Cape.

The award, named after the late Dr. Howard Cherry, a Portland orthopedic surgeon and educational advocate, recognizes board members, employees and advocates of community colleges who make a difference.

She lives in Seaside.

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