

# Dead whale had 115 plastic cups, two flip-flops in its stomach

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A dead whale that washed ashore in eastern Indonesia had a large lump of plastic waste in its stomach, including drinking cups and flip-flops, a park official said, causing concern among environmentalists and government officials in one of the world's largest plastic polluting countries.

Rescuers from Wakatobi National Park found the rotting carcass of the 31-foot sperm whale in November near the park in Southeast Sulawesi province after receiving a report from environmentalists that villagers had surrounded the dead whale and were beginning to butcher the rotting carcass, park chief Heri Santoso said.

Santoso said researchers from wildlife conservation group WWF and the park's conservation academy found about 13 pounds of plastic waste in the animal's stomach, including 115 plastic cups, four plastic bottles, 25 plastic bags, two flip-flops, a nylon sack, and more than 1,000 other assorted pieces of plastic.

"Although we have not been able to deduce the cause of death, the facts that we see are truly awful," said Dwi Suprpti, a marine species conservation coordinator at WWF Indonesia.

She said it was not possible to determine if the plastic had caused the whale's death because of the animal's advanced state of



**PLASTIC POLLUTION.** In these undated photos released by Akademi Komunitas Kelautan dan Perikanan Wakatobi (Wakatobi Marine and Fisheries Community Academy or AKKP Wakatobi), researchers collect samples from the carcass of a beached whale at Wakatobi National Park in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The dead whale that washed ashore in eastern Indonesia had a large lump of plastic waste in its stomach, including drinking cups and flip-flops, causing concern among environmentalists and government officials in one of the world's largest plastic polluting countries. (Muhammad Irpan Sejati Tassakka, AKKP Wakatobi via AP)

decay.

Indonesia, an archipelago of 260 million people, is the world's second-largest plastic polluter after China, according to a study published in the journal *Science* in January. It produces 3.2 million tons of mismanaged plastic waste a year, of which 1.29 million tons ends up in the ocean, the study said.

Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Indonesia's coordinating minister of maritime affairs, said the whale's discovery should raise

public awareness about the need to reduce plastic use, and has spurred the government to take tougher measures to protect the ocean.

"I'm so sad to hear this," said Pandjaitan, who recently has campaigned for less use of plastic. "It is possible that many other marine animals are also contaminated with plastic waste and this is very dangerous for our lives."

He said the government is making efforts to reduce the use of plastic,

including urging shops not to provide plastic bags for customers and teaching about the problem in schools nationwide to meet a government target of reducing plastic use by 70 percent by 2025.

"This big ambition can be achieved if people learn to understand that plastic waste is a common enemy," he told The Associated Press.

## Swine fever adds to China's economic headaches

By Joe McDonald  
AP Business Writer

BEIJING — Chinese pig farmers, already reeling from rising feed costs in Beijing's tariff fight with U.S. President Donald Trump, are facing a new blow from an outbreak of African swine fever that has sent an economic shockwave through the countryside.

First detected in August, the disease has killed 1 million pigs, prompting authorities to restrict shipments of most of China's 700 million swine, even though nearly all are still healthy. That has disrupted supplies of pork, China's staple meat, to big cities while prices collapsed in areas with an oversupply of pigs that farmers are barred from shipping to other provinces.

"I can only manage to break even at the current price," said a breeder on the outskirts of Shenyang, northeast of

Beijing, where the first case was reported August 3. She said she was rearing about 100 pigs and would give only her surname, Yan.

"Unless we see a higher price for pigs, all my work this year would have gone for nothing," Yan said.

African swine fever doesn't affect humans but is highly contagious in pigs, making it a serious threat to farm areas.

The first cases were reported in Beijing, the capital. Authorities said a total of 86 pigs at two farms in suburban Fangshan district died. Then Xiamen Airlines, a mid-size Chinese carrier, announced it was suspending use of pork in in-flight meals.

The outbreak adds to a swarm of challenges for Chinese leaders as they grapple with Trump over Beijing's tech-

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**DEVASTATING DISEASE.** Pigs are seen in a hog pen at a village in China's Anhui province. Reeling from rising feed costs in Beijing's tariff fight with U.S. President Donald Trump, Chinese pig farmers are facing a new blow from an outbreak of African swine fever that has sent an economic shockwave through the countryside. (Chinatopix Via AP)

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