

Thursday, May 21, 2009

Laverne, Pacific white-sided dolphin, passes away

Vancouver, BC – Animal care staff at the Vancouver Aquarium were saddened to announce yesterday the passing of Laverne, an approximately 31-year old female Pacific white-sided dolphin.

She died early evening Wednesday, May 20. Later that same evening, as per normal procedure, a necropsy (animal version of an autopsy) was performed at the Provincial Animal Health Centre to try to determine the exact cause of death.

Dr. Marty Haulena, staff veterinarian at the Vancouver Aquarium, reports:

“Laverne died of an intestinal torsion (a twisting of the bowel) that resulted in a section of intestine dying and releasing bacteria and toxins into the peritoneal (abdominal) cavity. This in turn caused a very serious infection and organ failure. Intestinal torsions occur in a wide range of species including humans, dogs, horses, and dolphins”. Dr. Haulena further said that “Intestinal torsions are unpredictable, unpreventable, and, in most species, untreatable once the intestine has been severely compromised. Laverne received the best possible medical care, ensuring that her last few days of her life were as comfortable as possible”.

Laverne was estimated to be at least 31-years old and was in her geriatric twilight years, being the oldest Pacific white-sided dolphin in an aquarium in North America. She had a history of minor medical issues typically associated with aging including skin infections, yeast infections, and arthritis.

About the Vancouver Aquarium

The Vancouver Aquarium is a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, conservation practices, education, research, and direct action. Learn more at www.vanaqua.org

-30-

Media Contact:

Public Relations Coordinator
publicrelations@vanaqua.org
604.659.3752