

Editorial

Victor J. A. Manton took over as editor of this journal in 1985. He assumed full responsibility for all portions of the journal's production from the collection of subscriptions to the proofreading of the printed manuscripts. Under his guidance, *Aquatic Mammals* grew and developed as a fine academic source of information about marine mammals. In his editorial in volume 17.1 he indicated that volume 17 would be his last volume as editor.

I have been asked by V. J. A. Manton, and by the associated members of the European Association for *Aquatic Mammals*, to assume the role of editor beginning with this volume 18. I agreed to work at becoming your editor, not fully realizing the tremendous effort that Mr Manton had expended. I will do my best to continue the efforts of Victor Manton but will be calling on fellow members of EAAM to help me continue the fine growth that this journal has experienced through his efforts.

Paul E. Nachtigall

Letter to the editor

Is *Escherichia coli* a seal pathogen?

Dear Sirs,

Serotypes of *Escherichia coli* have been shown to cause disease in many mammalian species. I should like to record the isolation of a toxigenic serotype from a fatal case of diarrhoea in a neonatal harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*). The Northern Ireland Aquarium is actively involved in the rehabilitation of sick and orphaned seal calves as well as having a role in education and conservation. A harbor seal calf, believed to be in the second week of life, became acutely ill shortly after capture. Clinical signs included tachypnoea and watery diarrhoea. Rectal swabs were taken and cultured aerobically overnight at 37°C in brain/heart infusion broth (Cat. No. 0037, Difco Laboratories, Detroit, Michigan) before "streaking out" on to blood agar plates (Cat. No. CM271 Oxoid Ltd, Basingstoke, Hampshire + 5% ovine blood). After incubation for 48 hours at 37°C these plates yielded a pure culture of *E. coli*, the serotype being identified by the Central Public Health

Laboratory, 61 Colindale Ave., London NW9 5EQ as 9, ab. Toxigenic strains of this serogroup have been identified (B. Rowe, *in litt*). Treatment was with daily injections of oxytetracycline intramuscularly and Hartmann's Solution subcutaneously but was unsuccessful.

While it could not be proven that this seal died as a consequence of an *E. coli* infection, the isolation of a potentially toxigenic strain of the organism in pure culture from faecal swabs may not be without significance. Examination of rectal swabs examined from another harbor seal calf and an Atlantic grey seal (*Halichoerus gryphus*) calf of comparable age which were in the Aquarium a short time later failed to reveal any *E. coli* isolates.

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