

Sealpox Data Sought by CDC

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is seeking information on cases of sealpox that have occurred in recent years at locations worldwide. Sealpox is a zoonosis which principally affects seals and sea lions and is caused by viruses in the genus Parapoxviridae.

Because this virus can also affect humans the CDC is interested in learning about recent sealpox virus infections in wildlife or humans. Additionally, CDC laboratories can assist in providing diagnostic evaluation of suspected sealpox virus infections in humans or wildlife.

Sealpox has been identified in many pinniped species (see list below) and is most often seen in younger animals. Infected animals usually have 1-3 cm firm skin nodules on head, neck and thorax. Nodules can spread to abdomen, flippers, and mucosa or oral cavity, and can be solitary or in clusters. The infected area can be inflamed or necrotic. Lesions usually heal within a few weeks without treatment and leave a slightly raised gray scar without fur.

The sealpox virus is transmittable to humans who have contact with infected animals and often presents as lesions on the hands (which is sometimes mistaken for 'seal finger') in marine rehabilitation workers.

Please contact the Poxvirus and Rabies Branch/CDC with questions about the infection in humans or information you have on recent sealpox infection (mreynolds3@cdc.gov, aroess@cdc.gov or 404-639-4129).

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Pinniped species with known sealpox infections:

- -Gray Seals
- -Harbor Seals
- -Northern Fur Seals
- -Northern Elephant Seals
- -California Sea Lion
- -Steller Sea Lion
- -South America Sea Lion