

WILDLIFE INCIDENT UNIT

64/24



Original thinking... applied

WILDLIFE INCIDENT REPORT

INCIDENT NUMBER 64/24
PART OF STUDY WIIS23
REGIONAL NUMBER W/24/19
OTHER REFERENCES 28-B0072-08-24
SENDER APHA Carmarthen VIC
LOCATION Prestatyn
Flintshire
GRID REFERENCE SJ0682
INCIDENT DATE 28 July 2024
SUSPECTED CAUSE OF INCIDENT unknown
DATE OF REPORT 27 November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER

SIGNED

NUMBERS AND SPECIES INVOLVED

1 bread sample
3 seagulls

COPIED TO

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WILDLIFE INCIDENT REPORT



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Samples received		Date received	Sample identifier
101536	bread sample	22/8/24	Identity ref: 'WEL/3'
101549	seagulls	6/9/24	APHA ref: 28-B0072-08-24
101549	seagulls tissues	6/9/24	APHA ref: 28-B0072-08-24

Summary of field data

Two seagulls landed in a garden, regurgitated bread, and died. The birds were stored in a bucket and collected by the Police Rural Crime Unit. The gulls were stored frozen by the Rural Crime Unit, then sent to the APHA for post-mortem. An additional bird was found at the same location a few weeks later, with bread in its mouth. A sample of bread, and tissues from this bird were sent to Fera for testing. This is an urban area consisting of a mix of residential and commercial properties, near to a large beach.

Summary of post mortem report

One lesser black backed gull of unknown sex and unknown weight in fair body condition with severe autolysis was submitted dead for post-mortem. Brain, cloacal and oro-pharyngeal swabs were submitted for avian influenza, no Influenza A viral RNA was detected. Samples of brain and kidney were tested for West Nile Virus, no West Nile Virus RNA was detected. There were blood clots in oropharynx and oral cavity was reddened, with blood-stained fluid around beak and on feathers of head. The liver was pale. In the alimentary system there was dark red-brown fluid in oropharynx, the crop contained pink, very thick liquid content, the proventriculus contained thick pink liquid, the gizzard contained a few blades of grass and dark red liquid, and the intestinal content was a thick pink-grey liquid. There were several roundworms approximately 1.5cm in length in proventriculus. Sections of intestines were too autolysed to examine but there was a tapeworm approximately 5cm in length by 0.3cm wide amongst intestinal content. There was a 1cm diameter hole in the proventriculus with dark red/black edges. In the respiratory system there was dark red fluid in trachea and one white roundworm in the rostral trachea approximately 1cm long. The lungs were dark red but very autolysed. The genital system was not examined. All other organ systems were unremarkable. Results of histological examination of formalin-fixed samples from the liver and lung were hampered by advanced autolysis, so no meaningful examination was possible; histological examination of the heart and proventriculus, which had undergone mild autolysis, revealed no significant lesions. The tapeworm could not be identified as it had disintegrated. *Cosmocephalus* sp are known gastrointestinal nematodes of Lesser Black Backed Gulls. Both the tapeworm and the *Cosmocephalus* sp worms were present in low numbers and unlikely to be clinically significant. The worm in the trachea most likely originated in the gastrointestinal tract and was likely inhaled into the trachea around the time of death. No cause of death could be determined on postmortem examination of this Lesser Black Backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*). It was not possible to determine if the hole in the proventriculus occurred before or after death. The edges of the hole did have blackened edges but as there was no evidence of any associated peritonitis it is most likely a postmortem change.

Analysis : metaldehyde & carb (LC) analysis suite

101536		no metaldehyde & carb (LC) detected	detection limit	0.04	mg/kg
101549	stomach contents	no metaldehyde & carb (LC) detected	detection limit	0.04	mg/kg

Analysis : organophosphate analysis suite

101536		no organophosphate detected	detection limit	0.9	mg/kg
101549	stomach contents	no organophosphate detected	detection limit	1	mg/kg

Analysis : rodenticide & chloralose analysis suite

101549	liver	brodifacoum	confirmed	0.004	mg/kg
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Conclusion

Given the circumstances around this incident - several gulls regurgitated bread before dying - it was suspected that these birds had been poisoned. Laboratory analysis for a range of likely pesticides has been undertaken on the submitted sample of bread and on tissues from the seagull submitted for testing. These tests have detected and confirmed a small residue of brodifacoum in the seagull, at a level consistent with exposure only. No residues from the compound groups tested were found on the bread sample which was described as a cream-coloured paste with vegetation. Therefore, the cause of death of these seagulls remains uncertain.