DISEASES FOUND IN STELLER SEA LIONS FROM THE GULF OF ALASKA AND BERING SEA

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For the last seven years investigations of the causes of death and diseases of free-ranging Stellar Sea Lions have been done. Methods of investigation have been necropsy of animals that were either found dead or collected. Procedures performed on animals included gross necropsy, histopathology, bacteriology, and serology.

A subacute ulcerative dermatitis with alopecia, acanthosis and keratosis due to calicivirus and lice was found in pups. A chronic active dermatitis due to an unidentified mycotic agent was common. A mild multifocal pneumonia associated with lungworms and secondary bacterial infection was common. Mild mucopurulent rhinitis associated with nasal mites was extremely common. Gastric ulceration due to ascarids and gastric foreign bodies was a common incidental finding. Acanthocephalans and cestodes were found in the small intestine and caecum. Positive serological titers to chlamydia were found. A chlamydial organism was isolated from an aborted fetus from Cape St. Elias, Alaska. Emaciation was found in two 8-10 month old animals. A mild degree of neuronal degeneration was found in the brain stem of two adults. Gun shot was found in two adults.

A variety of diseases and infectious agents were found but none appeared to be related with the general decline. Abortion may be a significant factor in the decline of Stellar populations. The causative agents of abortion have not been determined and further work needs to be done.
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ABSTRACTS

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