



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

February 28, 2025

The Unfolding California Sea Lion Stranding Event

Since February 19th, CWC has received an unusually high volume of calls—an estimated 300 calls in one week—reporting stranded California Sea Lions showing signs of respiratory distress and seizure activity. The symptoms are consistent with those observed in animals suffering from Domoic Acid Toxicity (DA). Although we suspect this is a DA event, we have not yet received conclusive test or necropsy results.

In the last week, our team responded to 51 reports of stranded animals exhibiting these troubling signs. Each response averages two hours, typically covering hundreds of yards over variable terrain, climbing dozens of stairs, and navigating with an animal that can weigh up to 250 pounds. A safe rescue requires 4-6 trained Marine Mammal staff and volunteers.

One of these responses was for Green Stripe at Leo Carrillo State Beach on Tuesday, February 25th. The Marine Mammal staff refers to her as Green Stripe due to the nontoxic green coloring placed on the side of her body for identification purposes. This patient weighed 190lbs and when found was exhibiting behaviors ranging between unresponsive to stuporous. On examination, staff noted signs consistent with DA toxicity, severe dehydration and an eye injury. This patient, along with others suffering from DA, are given a course of anti-seizure medication and intense fluid therapy. Depending on the individual case needs, patients may also be given vitamin and nutritional supplements as well as antibiotics.



California Sea Lion in care CWC.



Patient of the Week

February 28, 2025

Domoic Acid (DA) Toxicity is an illness caused by “bioaccumulation” of the naturally occurring single-celled organism *Pseudo-nitzschia*. When blooms of this algae occur, Domoic Acid (DA) accumulates in fish and invertebrates, poisoning larger animals as it works its way up the food chain. Immediate exposure can lead to confusion, seizures, stargazing (a thrown-back or craning head motion), lethargy and a comatose state. While this condition can be treated if exposure is acute, repeated or chronic exposure to DA can lead to untreatable brain and heart damage.

What is causing these naturally occurring algae blooms to intensify? A rise in sea surface temperatures and high nutrient load from increased urban runoff from recent rains may be a contributing factor.

CWC is the permitted response agency for beaches in Malibu. If you see a sea lion or other marine life in distress on the Los Angeles County beaches in Malibu, report the sighting to California Wildlife Center’s Marine Mammal Rescue Team by calling or texting (310) 924-7256. Remain at a safe distance (50+ feet), note a landmark like a nearby lifeguard tower, and take a picture or video of the animal with your phone to assist rescuers. If you would like to support our Marine Mammal team as they address this evolving event, please donate by clicking the link below.



"Green Strip" displaying signs of improvement after just a couple days of supportive care.