

THE CLINICAL IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOW UP COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY SCANS IN THORACIC DISEASE OF BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS (*TURSIOPS TRUNCATUS*)

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Computed Tomography (CT) scans have been utilized as a key diagnostic tool in assisting in the identification, cause and treatment of thoracic and pulmonary disease in cetaceans for many years. Computed tomography (CT) is a cross-sectional diagnostic imaging modality that allows detailed examination of the entire thorax without the superimposition of radiography^{1,2}. Thoracic disease is one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in bottlenose dolphins that are in wild populations, stranded or under managed care¹. In human medicine, the primary rationale for recommending serial follow-up CT studies for thoracic, pulmonary and respiratory disease is that a percentage of cases will turn out to be cancers and that early intervention will provide an opportunity for cure^{3,4}. Dolphins Plus Inc. has performed fifteen CT scans in bottlenose dolphins with thoracic disease and over half of these have been follow up scans in order to assess clinical status, treatment efficacy and status of disease. Several cases had progression of diseases after treatment, despite apparent clinical improvement. Serial CT scans can be an excellent indicator of whether to cease, continue or change treatment for disease.

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LITERATURE CITED

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