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Building Capacity and International Partnerships to Address Anthropogenic Impacts on Aquatic Animal Health: 44th Annual Conference of the International Association of Aquatic Animal Medicine

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LONG-TERM GOALS

The long-term goal of this project is to improve the ability of aquatic animal professionals worldwide to diagnose effects of anthropogenic activities on animal health through training and capacity building.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project was met by hosting an international conference in Sausalito in April 2013 with four specific objectives:

- Facilitate exchange of information on methods for detection of causes of trauma, disease and mortality in aquatic animals amongst internationally recognized experts by delivery of plenary talks from world leaders followed by smaller break-out group discussions.
- Train on-ground responders from countries with limited response capacity by enabling their attendance at hands-on workshops and post-conference training at TMMC.
- Produce training documents from workshop and conference proceedings.
- Facilitate development of international partnerships for assistance during emergency morbidity and mortality events through introductions and discussion throughout the workshop.

APPROACH

The approach of the proposal was to enhance capacity to diagnose and mitigate aquatic animal unusual mortality events worldwide, by providing expert, multidisciplinary training to four international trainees, as well as support the travel of four international aquatic animal health experts to Northern California to facilitate exchange of information, and develop lasting professional collaborations. These activities occurred in conjunction with the 44th Annual Conference of the International Association for Aquatic Animal Medicine in 2013. This scientific meeting facilitated the sharing and integration of expertise across geographic regions, species, and disciplines in order to address emerging issues of

concern in the field of aquatic animal health and medicine, with a focus on anthropogenic impacts on aquatic populations.

Conference sessions highlighted recent advances in tools and technologies, including telemetry/tagging, emerging infectious diseases such as Brucellosis, and the interpretation of gas bubbles in stranded cetaceans. Workshops provided training in oil spill preparedness, necropsy techniques to determine anthropogenic causes of mortality, and diagnostic imaging.

WORK COMPLETED

The Annual IAAAM conference was hosted in Sausalito at Cavallo Point Lodge 20-26 April 2013, and a one week training module was hosted at The Marine Mammal Center for 12 international veterinarians. Over 400 people registered for the conference from 30 different countries. Twelve trainees completed the training course at The Marine Mammal Center after the conference. Four internationally-recognized speakers presented information on marine mammal health issues in their countries (Dr. Marcela Uhart –South America, Dr. Padraig Duignan – Australasia, Dr. Paul Jepson – Europe, Dr. Paolo Martelli – South East Asia).

Proceedings from the conference are on the website at www.iaaam.org. A pdf of the program is attached.

RESULTS

The 200 talks and posters presented at the conference are posted to the www.iaaam.org website. Each conference attendee who attended specific workshops was given access to a Dropbox folder of relevant training materials and publications. Workshops were held over the weekend prior to the formal conference on the following topics: diagnostic imaging (S. Dennison), ship strike diagnosis (M. Moore), oil spill preparedness (M. Ziccardi), pinniped sampling and handling (Gulland).

IMPACT/APPLICATIONS

The focus of the IAAAM was directed at understanding anthropogenic impacts on aquatic health, and veterinarians from around the world developed relationships and established collaborations for future research on this topic. Productive discussions on future directions in tag design for cetaceans, diagnosis of stress and detection of emerging pathogens were held. Further workshops to develop international capacity are being planned by NMFS staff.

RELATED PROJECTS

None