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FIRST CASE OF LOBOMYCOSIS IN A BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN FROM SOUTHERN BRAZIL

Lobomycosis was first described by Lobo (1931) at Recife, in northeast Brazil. For many years it was considered an exclusively human pathology, limited to Latin America, but this view has changed with the first reports of the disease in bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus,* derived from the Florida coast (Migaki *et al.* 1971, Woodard 1972, Poelma *et al.* 1974, Caldwell *et al.* 1975, Dudok van Heel 1977, Bossart 1984, Dailey 1985). Vries and Laarman (1973) report the occurrence of this mycosis in *Sotalia guianensis* (= *Sotalia fluviatilis* Gervais) based on a specimen captured in the estuary of the Surinam River.

This report of lobomycosis in a wild bottlenose dolphin is the first record for the southwestern South Atlantic.

A fresh adult female *T. truncatus* was recovered on 22 February 1990 in the jetties of Laguna (28°30'S, 48°45'W), Santa Catarina State, southern Brazil. Its skull was preserved (UFSC 1089) in the Laboratorio de Mamiferos Aquaticos collection of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. It was an exceptionally large animal (320 cm long) with several light-colored, verrucoid cutaneous lesions. These lesions were concentrated mainly on the flanks and ventral portion of the body, affecting the bottom and sides of the lower jaw, throat, both sides of the flippers extending through the axillary region and part of the thorax, in addition to single patches on the sides of the tailstock (Fig. 1).

Gross and microscopic findings were typical for this disease. Yellowish nodules (1 cm in diameter) with firm consistency could be observed into the reticular dermis. Histologic analysis of the cutaneous lesion revealed a chronic granulomatous inflammation with severe acanthosis. This tissue presented agglomerates of fungal lemon-shaped elements 15 μm in diameter with double walls and unipolar branching.

The diagnosis was based on the cytologic examination of skin lesions, considering that it was not possible to isolate the etiological agent. The fungal elements were identified as *Loboa loboi* by the use of light microscopy, but there are still many doubts considering the occurrence of secondary invasion and contaminants.

The geographical distribution of the disease is poorly understood. According to Caldwell *et al.* (1975) lobomicosis in Florida bottlenose dolphins has been found at least since 1955. Despite the fact that we are dealing with an isolated case, this new record of lobomycosis in a wild bottlenose dolphin considerably changes the disease range, extending its known distribution to the South Atlantic Ocean as far as the Subtropical Convergence. The propagation of this mycosis remains unknown, making necessary a complete inventory of other species of South American cetaceans.

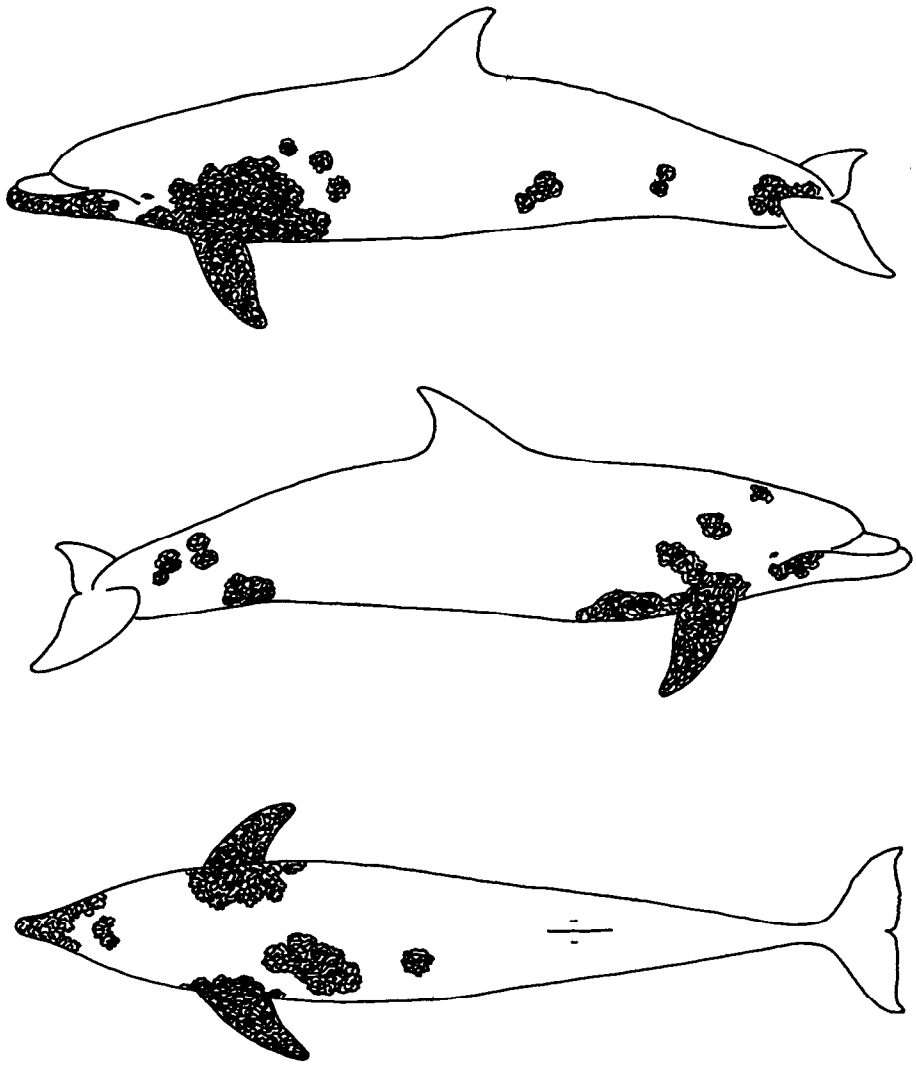

Figure 1. Diagrams of dolphin (UFSC 1089) showing location of lobomycosis lesions.

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P. C. SIMÕSE-LOPES AND G. S. PAULA, Fundação Barddal, Cx. Postal 5102, Florianópolis, 88040-970, Brazil, M. C. BOTH, International Wildlife Coalition-Brazil, F. M. XAVIER AND A. C. SCARAMELLO, Serviço de Anatomia Patológica do Hospital Universitário, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil. Received April 13, 1992. Accepted January 7, 1993.