

British Divers Marine Life Rescue



UK Registered Charity
No. 803438

SEAL BITES

To whom it may concern

The person presenting this letter has come into physical contact with a wild seal and may have an injury that could develop into a condition known as 'seal finger'.

Seal finger is an infection resulting from seal bites or contamination of open wounds, usually on the fingers, during contact with seals. A papular lesion resembling a mosquito bite develops after the bite or exposure, with an incubation period that may range from a few hours to 4 days. This lesion soon becomes swollen and intensely painful but may not be erythematous. Untreated, the lesions can develop into cellulitis, tenosynovitis and septic arthritis. Historically, it has been unclear as to the nature of the pathogens associated with these lesions, but in the 1990s, a **Mycoplasma** species (*Mycoplasma phocacerebrale*), a member of the normal oropharyngeal flora of seals, was implicated.

Tetracycline 500mg four times a day for 2-6 weeks has been determined as the treatment of choice for this Mycoplasma infection. Penicillin, flucloxacillin, ampicillin, erythromycin and sulphonamides have all been associated with treatment failure.

Thank you for your attention.

James Barnett BSc BVSc CBiol MIBiol MRCVS
Director and veterinary surgeon
British Divers Marine Life Rescue

References

Baker AS, Ruoff KL, Madoff S. Isolation of Mycoplasma species from a patient with seal finger. *Clin Infect Dis* 1998; **27**(5):1168-70.
Mass DP, Newmeyer WL, Kilgore ES, Jr. "Seal finger". *J Hand Surg [Am]* 1981; **6**(6):610-2.

This letter is available from www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk/sealbiteletter

DIRECTORS

Alan Knight B.Sc (Hons)
Mark Stevens B.Ed (Hons)
James Barnett B.Sc (Hons)
BVSc MRCVS
Geoff Hammock
Robert Archell

COMPANY SECRETARY

Alison Stevens

PATRONS

Dr Horace Dobbs
Dr Martha Holmes
Elizabeth Emanuel
Amanda Levick

VETERINARY CONSULTANTS

Ian Robinson BVSc
Cert SHP MRCVS
Paul Jepson BVMS MRCVS
Tony Patterson BVM&S
Cert SHP MRCVS

SCIENTIFIC CONSULTANTS

Mark Simmonds
Bob Reid

BANKERS

Cooperative Bank
26 Military Road
Chatham
Kent ME4 4JX
A/C No. 6500422900

Head Office: Lime House, Regency Close, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 1DS. 24 hour Telephone & Fax: 01825 765546.

British Divers Marine Life Rescue is an international marine animal rescue organisation, UK based and a Registered Charity.

The aims of the organisation are to provide a rescue service for all marine wildlife, to provide support to all existing rescue centres and to develop new methods of treatment, transport and care.

Email: info@bdmlr.org.uk Web: www.bdmlr.org.uk