

Received from Debbie McGuire, Wildlife Director, Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center:

I received this from USF&WS this afternoon. Report any WEGR, CLGR, or AMCO's that come in with neurological symptoms. Please use normal bio safety and apply nitrile gloves, eye protection, masks, etc. when handling as this is an unknown agent. Do not perform any necropsies on these species. Talk to you later,

Debbie McGuire, Wildlife Director  
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Please read:

All

I've been in contact with Barbara Bodenstein of the National Wildlife Health Center today. Based on sampling results taken from southern California including Ventura County and at least one western grebe (that I collected in south SD Bay earlier last month), there may be something going on in our coastal MARINE systems that is causing mortality mostly seen in grebes (mostly western and Clark's). Note that this is a different pathology than the cyanobacterial toxins found in freshwater systems (eg Lake Hodges) recently.

Dr Bodenstein told me that they are seeing lesions in the vacuoles of the brains collected from dead grebes. She called the syndrome "vacular myelinopathy" and its cause is currently unknown, but may be linked to some toxin present in the environment. She told me that they have only seen this before in the southeast US, mostly in coots, but also in raptors that fed on the dead coots. This is a chilling scenario.. because it makes me think of prion diseases like transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (eg mad cow). Bad juju... in any case, the causal factor for these legions is not currently known and the national lab is highly motivated to get more samples.

**So, please report any fresh grebe carcasses you may notice in the field.**

The lab needs fresh (within 24 hours), unfrozen samples to identify these lesions. Barbara will be sending me their final report on the findings so far in the next day or two and I will disseminate it. In the meantime, please keep an eye out for distressed grebes and lets collect some if we can... normal biosafety rules apply, nitrile gloves, eye protection, respirators, etc. as this is an unknown agent. It's probably not transmissible without eating the darn things but let's not take any chances.

Bri

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