

Scientists concerned by high number of baby dolphin deaths in Gulf

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No surprises here!

GULFPORT -- The industry's leading scientist on marine mammal strandings is concerned about the deaths of baby dolphins. Blair Mase, NOAA's marine mammal stranding coordinator for the Southeast region, confirmed that the number of baby dolphin deaths is high.

She said the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies reports all its findings to her.

So far this calving season, 17 infant dolphins have either been stillborn or died shortly after birth.

"We're definitely keeping a close eye on this situation," Mase said. "We're comparing this to previous years, trying to find out what's going on here."

She said this is the time of the year that she sees death in young dolphins, because it is the beginning of the birthing season. But really, the normal birthing season is a little later in the year, she said.

"We're trying to determine if we do in fact have still births," she said. There are more in Mississippi than in Alabama and Louisiana.

"With the oil spill, it is difficult," she said. "We're trying to determine what's causing this. It could be infectious related. Or it could be non-infection."

"We run the gamut of causes," she said, including human impact, which would include the oil spill; infectious disease and bio-toxins,

IMMS has been conducting necropsies on the baby dolphins and sharing the findings with Mase.

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See video:

<http://www.sunherald.com/2011/02/21/2881379/sunherald-tv-17-dead-baby-dolphins.html>

<http://tinyurl.com/4kxg44k>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-2338.html>