

Beached dolphins feared dead



Local residents try to save melon-headed dolphins stranded on the coast in Hokota, northeast of Tokyo.

- 1) Nearly half of about 150 dolphins stranded on a beach in Ibaraki Prefecture died while 45 were put back in the sea, a local official said Saturday.
- 2) "We have yet to find out why they beached," said Hitoshi Igawa of the Industrial Affairs Division of the Hokota municipal office.
- 3) Scientists took 34 of the creatures for inspection to determine the potential cause of the mass beaching by a total 149 melon-headed whales, a member of the

dolphin family, in Hokota. Seven more were stranded in nearby municipality of Kashima, according to Igawa.

- 4) "We just have to wait for the inspection results," he said, adding 70 of the creatures will be locally buried at four sites in accordance with regulations.

5) Rescuers were forced on Friday to abandon efforts to save the creatures after frantic efforts all day.

6) As darkness fell, local officials in Hokota said the rescue effort had been called off. The rest of the creatures, usually found in the deep ocean, had either died or were dying, they said.

7) "It was becoming dark and too dangerous to continue the rescue work at this beach, where we could not bring heavy equipment," said an unnamed Hokota municipal official. "Many people volunteered to rescue them but the dolphins became very, very weak.

8) "Only three of them have been successfully returned to the sea, as far as we can confirm," he added.

9) Local residents and coast guard teams had battled through the day to save the animals, trying to stop their skin from drying out as they lay on the sand. Others were carried in slings back toward the ocean.

10) Television footage showed several animals from the large pod had been badly cut, and many had deep gashes to their skin.

11) A journalist at the scene said that some of the creatures were being pushed back onto the beach by the tide after being released, despite efforts to return them to the water. "We see one or two whales washing ashore a year, but this may be the first time we have found over 100 of them on a beach," a coast guard official said.

12) The pod was spread out along a roughly 10-km stretch of beach in the Ibaraki area, where they were found early Friday morning.

13) "They are alive. I feel sorry for them," one man at the scene told NHK, as others ferried buckets of seawater to the stranded animals to pour over them.

14) Massive efforts were required to get the three that survived back into the water. Rescuers wrapped them with blankets before putting them on a coast guard vessel. The animals were taken to waters about 10 km from the shore and released, according to NHK.

15) Footage showed many of the less fortunate animals laying in shallow waters, too weak to swim, being pushed back and forth by the waves.

16) While the reason for the beaching was unclear, Tadasu Yamadao, a researcher at the National Museum of Nature and Science, said the dolphins might have got lost. "Sonar waves the dolphins emit might have been absorbed in the shoals, which could cause them to lose their sense of direction," he told the Yomiuri Shimbun.

17) Melon-headed whales, also known as electra dolphins, are relatively common in Japanese waters and can grow to 2 to 3 meters long. In 2011, about 50 melon-headed whales beached themselves in a similar area.【April 11, 2015/AFP-JIJI】

beach:(船や鯨が浜に乗り上げる=run ashore) melon-headed dolphin: カズハゴンドウ be stranded:岸に打ちあがる potential:可能な、潜在的な inspection:調査 municipality:自治都市 abandon:あきらめる、断念する frantic:熱狂した、半狂乱の sling:吊り索 footage:映像 pod:(あざらしや鯨や鳥等の)群れ gash:切り傷 wash ashore:岸に打ちあがる shallow:浅い sonar:ソナー、(超)音波探知機 Sound Navigation and Ranging の略 emit:発する absorb:吸収する shoal:浅瀬

☆Ice breaker for active discussion☆

1. Have you ever seen real dolphins? Please share your experience.
2. What is your impression about this news article?
3. If you were at this very beach, what would you do?
4. Some people say that this phenomenon is a "quake alert".
What can you say about it?
5. Some criticize the usage of dolphins in some shows.
What is your opinion about it?
6. How can we help in the marine conservation?
7. Make sentences using the following words: strand, potential, municipality, abandon, frantic, footage, gash, absorb and shallow.

4月10日朝、茨城県の海岸10キロ間に、156頭のイルカが打ち上げられていると確認された。海上保安署員や消防署員、地元住民やボランティアは、ブルーシートを使ってイルカを波打ち際まで運び海に放したが多くが再び荒波に押し戻された。マイルカ科の「カズハゴンドウ」は、体長は2~3メートル、重さは270キロ程。100~500頭の群れをつくり、ハワイ沖のような比較的暖かい海域に生息する。ネット上では大地震の予兆ではないかとの憶測が飛び交ったが、専門家の多くは、科学的根拠がないとの見解を示した。