

# Algal bloom wildlife post-mortem report



Government of South Australia

Department for Environment and Water

## Species – Little penguin

## Date collected – 9 April 2025

## Location – South Point Drive, Port Lincoln

## History relating to the animal

One adult male little penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) was found dead on the beach at South Point Drive, Port Lincoln on 9 April 2025.

## Clinical examination

The animal was already dead and so could not be examined prior to death.

## Necropsy

The necropsy (looking at the whole body) revealed that the little penguin was in good body condition and weighed 1.2kg. There was mild to moderate putrefactive post-mortem autolytic change (decomposing after death). There was abundant small fish in the proventriculus and ventriculus (parts of the gut, similar to the stomach of other animals).

Samples were collected to test for avian influenza and Newcastle disease. Tissues were collected for histopathology (looking at tissues under the microscope for more detailed information), with additional samples collected and stored to allow for additional testing if required.

## Histopathology

Samples from every major body system were examined under the microscope. Haemorrhage (bleeding) was noted within the trachea (windpipe) and throughout the lungs. There was inflammation within the liver (hepatitis) and regions of autolytic changes noted (decomposing cells after death).

## Virology

Testing results for avian influenza and Newcastle disease were negative.

## Summary

An adult male little penguin was found dead at Port Lincoln. The cause of death could not be determined. Laboratory examination found the animal had hepatitis, likely caused by bacteria. However, further testing (bacterial culture) was not conducted as post-mortem decomposition of the tissues complicates interpretation of results. Bleeding found in the trachea and lungs was likely due to agonal change (at the time of death) rather than other causes, such as trauma. Testing for avian influenza and Newcastle disease was negative.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 13 August 2025 5:00 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** PATH RESULTS: PENGUIN LITTLE, (Wi) [REDACTED]

GRIBBLES VETERINARY PATHOLOGY

Tested on 11/04/25  
Reported on 13/08/25 17:30  
Referred on 09/04/25 by:

**Owner:**  
PENGUIN LITTLE  
22 SOUTH POINT DRIVE  
PORT LINCOLN 5606

**Animal/s:**  
Wild Birds  
**DOB:** N/A

**Collected:** 09/04/25 00:25 **Subm.No.:** [REDACTED]

**Lab No.:** [REDACTED]

**Samples tested as received**

All Tests Complete

SUMMARY DIAGNOSIS  
Necrotizing hepatitis

SUMMARY COMMENTS

The hepatitis may have contributed to morbidity for this bird. The hepatitis is suggestive of a bacteraemia. Please note that due to the autolytic changes, any microbiological culture of the liver may be confounded by post mortem proliferation of bacteria and may be unrewarding. Fresh liver is stored. Please contact the laboratory within the next 5 working days if microbiological culture is required. Additional charges will apply.

Avian influenza and Newcastle disease are excluded as causes of death.

[REDACTED]  
Specialist Veterinary Anatomic Pathologist

Validated by [REDACTED]

GRIBBLES VETERINARY PATHOLOGY

Tested on 11/04/25  
Reported on 13/08/25 17:30  
Referred on 09/04/25 by:

Owner:  
PENGUIN LITTLE  
22 SOUTH POINT DRIVE  
PORT LINCOLN 5606

Animal/s:  
Wild Birds  
DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/04/25 00:25 Subm.No.: [REDACTED] Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

All Tests Complete

HISTOPATHOLOGY FROM NECROPSY

REF: [REDACTED]  
CLINICAL HISTORY

Please refer to the clinical history on the request form and the clinical notes sent with the request form. A brief summary of the clinical history;  
Little penguin found dead washed up on shore at 22 South Point Drive, Port Lincoln  
Provisional diagnoses: starving, infectious, toxin

SAMPLES SUBMITTED  
One dead adult male little penguin (*Edulyptus minor*)

MACROSCOPY  
Slides A-E contains liver, spleen, heart, lung, kidney, brain, proventriculus / ventriculus, jejunum, ileum, skeletal muscle, trachea;  
Ae GK

MICROSCOPY  
Trachea: There is clotted blood in the lumen.

Lung: Multifocally there is haemorrhage within the lumen of multiple air capillaries. Diffusely there is hyperaemia / congestion of the interstitium lining air capillaries.

Liver: Multifocally, and randomly the hepatic parenchyma is effaced and replaced by moderate numbers of heterophils, macrophages, lymphocytes and fewer plasma cells admixed with karyorrhectic debris. Around portal areas there are low numbers of lymphocytes, plasma cells, macrophages.

(Hepatitis, necrotizing, heterophilic, lymphocytic, histiocytic, mild, multifocal, subacute)

There is moderate to marked autolysis of the kidney, ileum, jejunum, proventriculus / ventriculus.

Those tissues not described including spleen, heart, brain, skeletal muscle,

**DIAGNOSIS**

Trachea and lung: Acute haemorrhage

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[REDACTED]

Owner:  
PENGUIN LITTLE  
22 SOUTH POINT DRIVE  
PORT LINCOLN 5606

Animal/s:  
Wild Birds  
DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/04/25 00:25 Subm.No.: [REDACTED] Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

All Tests Complete

Liver: Hepatitis, necrotizing, heterophilic, lymphocytic, histiocytic, mild, multifocal, subacute

COMMENTS

The hepatitis may have contributed to morbidity for this bird. The hepatitis is suggestive of a bacteraemia. Please note that due to the autolytic changes, any microbiological culture of the liver may be confounded by post mortem proliferation of bacteria and may be unrewarding. Fresh liver is stored. Please contact the laboratory within the next 5 working days if microbiological culture is required. Additional charges will apply.

The acute pulmonary haemorrhage was likely an agonal change.

Avian influenza and Newcastle disease are excluded as causes of death.

[REDACTED]  
Specialist Veterinary Anatomic Pathologist

Validated by [REDACTED]

Number of samples 4

CASE MANAGEMENT DETAILS

Case Managed by: [REDACTED]

Case Management Requested by: [REDACTED]

Case Management Requested on: 11/04/25

Case Details:

1 x little penguin found dead at 22  
South Point Drive, Port Lincoln.

GRIBBLES VETERINARY PATHOLOGY

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Owner:  
PENGUIN LITTLE  
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PORT LINCOLN 5606

Animal/s:  
Wild Birds  
DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/04/25 00:25 Subm.No: [REDACTED]

Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

All Tests Complete

MOLECULAR DIAGNOSTICS

INFLUENZA A RNA PCR (REAL TIME REVERSE TRANSCRIPTASE)

Specimen type: Cloacal & Tracheal swabs in VTM

SPECIMEN ID      Type A                      H5                      H7

PENGUIN              Not detected

Validated by [REDACTED] Laboratory Scientist.

GRIBBLES VETERINARY PATHOLOGY

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[REDACTED]

Owner:  
PENGUIN LITTLE  
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PORT LINCOLN 5606

Animal/s:  
Wild Birds  
DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/04/25 00:25 Subm.No.: [REDACTED] Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

All Tests Complete

MOLECULAR DIAGNOSTICS

NEWCASTLE DISEASE VIRUS RNA PCR (REAL TIME REVERSE TRANSCRIPTASE)

Specimen type: Cloacal & Number of specimens: 1  
Tracheal swabs in VTM

SPECIMEN ID	F Gene	M Gene	L Gene
PENGUIN	Not detected	Not detected	Not detected

Validated by [REDACTED] Laboratory Scientist.

GRIBBLES VETERINARY PATHOLOGY

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Animal/s:  
Wild Birds  
DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/04/25 00:25 Subm.No.: [REDACTED]

Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

All Tests Complete

NECROPSY REPORT

CLINICAL HISTORY

Please refer to the clinical history on the request form and the clinical notes sent with the request form. A brief summary of the clinical history;

Little penguin found dead washed up on shore at 22 South Point Drive, Port Lincoln

Provisional diagnoses: starving, infectious, toxin

SAMPLES SUBMITTED

One dead adult male little penguin (*Edulyptus minor*) in a bag with a tag. The tag is labelled as outlined below:

Reported 9/4/25 by [REDACTED] << cannot discern the name>> at 4:15pm

Collected 9/4/25 by [REDACTED] at 6pm

Location South Pt drive Pt Lincoln

34.7 4323 S

135.87801 E

NECROPSY FINDINGS

The bird is in good body condition and weighs 1.2kg. There are mild to moderate post mortem autolytic changes. The proventriculus / ventriculus contains abundant small fish (presumptive *Sardinops* sp.).

GROSS SUMMARY

Unremarkable gross findings

SAMPLES COLLECTED & TESTING

Cloacal and tracheal swabs in VTM will be tested for AI and NDV by q PCR.

Formalin fixed liver, spleen, heart, lung, kidney, brain, crop, proventriculus, ventriculus, duodenum, jejunum, colon and fresh, liver, spleen, kidney, heart, lung, brain are stored.  
Tissues will be stored for 1 month then discarded if no further testing is requested.

COMMENTS

There are no findings to explain the death of this animal. The animal had recently fed.

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PENGUIN LITTLE  
22 SOUTH POINT DRIVE  
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Animal/s:  
Wild Birds  
DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/04/25 00:25 Subm.No.: [REDACTED] Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

All Tests Complete

[REDACTED]  
Specialist Veterinary Anatomic Pathologist  
[REDACTED]

Validated by [REDACTED]