

Algal bloom wildlife post-mortem report



Government
of South Australia

Department for
Environment and Water

Species – Long-nosed fur seal

Date collected – 9 February 2026

Location – Hindmarsh River mouth, Victor Harbor

History relating to the animal

A juvenile male long-nosed fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*) was found appearing severely underweight and unwell at the Hindmarsh River mouth on 9 February 2026. The seal was euthanised and collected the same day.

Clinical examination

The seal appeared severely underweight and unwell, with its eyes closed and twitching. The animal was assessed by a veterinarian and was subsequently euthanised.

Necropsy

The necropsy (looking at the whole body) revealed that the animal was in very poor body condition, weighing 4.6kg. There was minimal subcutaneous (under the skin) fat, and no fat stores within the abdomen or in the retroperitoneal space (area behind the abdominal cavity, toward the spine). There was marked atrophy (wasting) of the intercostal (between the ribs) and epaxial muscles over the vertebrae (spine).

The animal was 720mm in length, with a body circumference of 360mm caudal (towards the rear) of the pectoral (chest) flippers. There was mild to moderate post-mortem autolytic change (decomposition after death).

There was scant mucoid ingesta (mucus and food material) in the stomach, a small amount of pale brown pasty ingesta in the intestines and the faeces were dark brown and soft. There was approximately 2mL of urine in the bladder.

Tissues were collected for histopathology (looking at tissues under the microscope for more detailed information) and testing for *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTb) complex and *Mycobacterium avium* (*M. avium*) complex organisms, *Brucella* species bacteria, and brevetoxins and other algal biotoxins testing (a possibility due to the algal bloom).

Histopathology

Samples from every major body system were examined under the microscope. There was mild autolysis (decomposition of tissues after death) of the digestive tract (gut), with evaluation of other tissues unremarkable.

Bacteriology

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for MTb complex organisms, *M. avium* complex organisms, and *Brucella* species bacteria was negative.

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Brevetoxins

No samples were above the limits of reporting.

Other biotoxins

Tetrodotoxin (TTX) (a paralytic marine toxin) was detected in faeces (0.06 mg/kg).

Pectenotoxin-2 (PTX2) (a type of diarrhetic shellfish toxin) was detected in faeces (0.05 mg/kg).

Summary

A juvenile male long-nosed fur seal was found severely underweight and unwell and was subsequently euthanised. Laboratory examination could not determine the cause of severe weight loss or death. It is suspected that poor nutrition contributed to the animal's weakened condition, possibly due to reduced food availability in the environment, although this could not be confirmed. Testing for tuberculosis (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTb) complex and *Mycobacterium avium* (M. avium) complex organisms) and brucellosis (*Brucella* species bacteria) was negative.

Tetrodotoxin (TTX, a paralytic marine toxin found in several fish and invertebrate species, including pufferfish and octopus) and Pectenotoxin-2 (PTX-2, a diarrhetic shellfish toxin produced by some algae) was detected in the faeces of this animal. Brevetoxins and other algal biotoxins were not detected. TTX is a potent neurotoxin (affecting the nervous system) that can cause a range of clinical signs, including numbness, nausea, and diarrhoea, progressing to generalised muscle paralysis, cardiac arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms), and potentially death due to respiratory failure (inability to breathe as a result of muscle paralysis) in humans. Consumption of shellfish contaminated with pectenotoxins (PTXs) has been associated with incidences of severe diarrhoea in humans.

There is limited information regarding TTX poisoning in marine mammals, however, based on its known mechanism of action, a similar spectrum of clinical signs as seen in people following exposure may be expected. There are limited studies on the effects of PTX-2 on mammals, however animals appear to be resistant to high concentrations when the toxin is ingested as it is metabolised by the liver.

The presence of these toxins in this animal may have contributed to its illness and death. However, profound weakness due to starvation and paralysis can be clinically indistinguishable, and in the absence of supporting antemortem (before death) testing and the findings on necropsy in this case, any association between tetrodotoxin and pectenotoxin-2 exposure and this animal's death remains speculative.

PATH RESULTS: LONG NOSED FUR SEAL, (Ma) [REDACTED]

From [REDACTED]

Date Thu 19/02/2026 5:00 PM

To [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Tested on 10/02/26
Reported on 19/02/26 17:30
Referred on 09/02/26 **by:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Owner:

LONG NOSED FUR SEAL
HINDMARSH RIVER MOUTH
VICTOR HARBOR 5211

Animal/s:

Marine Mammal

DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/02/26 19:10 **Subm.No:** [REDACTED]

Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

HISTOPATHOLOGY FROM NECROPSY

REF: [REDACTED]

CLINICAL HISTORY

This is a summary of the clinical history. Please refer to the request form for the full clinical history.

The long nosed fur seal pup was reported by member of the public at 6 PM on 9/2/2026 300 m east to the Hindmarsh river mouth. The animal was found lying in the wash zone. It was emaciated with its eyes closed and was twitching. The vet arrived at 7:10 PM and euthanasia was advised. Pentobarbital was injected into the heart and the animal was euthanised.

SAMPLES SUBMITTED

1 x dead juvenile male long nosed fur seal, *Arctocephalus forsteri*

MACROSCOPY

Slides contain the following tissues

A: heart, lung, liver

B: liver, kidney, spleen, skeletal muscle

C-D: stomach, pancreas, duodenum, jejunum, ileum, caecum, colon, rectum

E-F: thalamus and hippocampus
G: thalamus and hippocampus
H: parietal cortex
I: basal ganglia
J: frontal cortex
K: midbrain
L: cerebellum
M: medulla
N: occipital cortex; Ae GK

MICROSCOPY

All tissues are histologically unremarkable.

There is mild autolysis of alimentary sections but no other findings are evident.

DIAGNOSIS

Unremarkable histological findings

COMMENTS

The cause for the chronic weight loss and weakness is not found based on gross and histopathological findings.



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HINDMARSH RIVER MOUTH
VICTOR HARBOR 5211

Animal/s:

Marine Mammal

DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/02/26 19:10

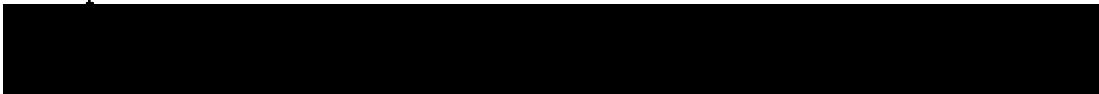
Subm.No:



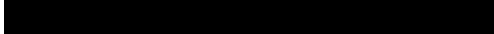
Lab No.:



Samples tested as received



Specialist Veterinary Anatomic Pathologist



Validated by



SUMMARY DIAGNOSIS

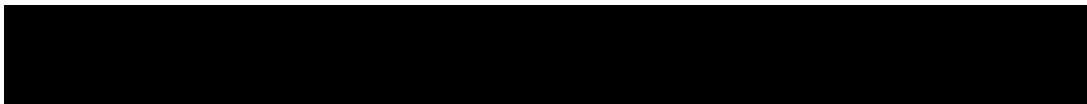
No diagnosis concluded

SUMMARY COMMENTS

Chronic weight loss contributed to morbidity for this animal. The cause of morbidity and weight loss is not determined based on gross and histopathological findings.

Could decreased feed abundance due to the variable Karenia sp. algal bloom, have contributed to the animal's weight loss ?

A quote for biotoxin and brevetoxin testing from Analytical Services Tasmania will be sent to you for approval.



Specialist Veterinary Anatomic Pathologist



Validated by



[REDACTED]

Tested on 10/02/26
Reported on 19/02/26 17:30
Referred on 09/02/26 **by:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Owner:
LONG NOSED FUR SEAL
HINDMARSH RIVER MOUTH
VICTOR HARBOR 5211

Animal/s:
Marine Mammal

DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/02/26 19:10

Subm.No: [REDACTED]

Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

NECROPSY REPORT

CORRECTED REPORT 19/2/2026

The typographical errors have been corrected in the history.

CLINICAL HISTORY

This is a summary of the clinical history. Please refer to the request form for the full clinical history.

The long nosed fur seal pup was reported by member of the public at 6 PM on 9/2/2026 300 m east to the Hindmarsh river mouth. The animal was found lying in the wash zone. It was emaciated with its eyes closed and was twitching. The vet arrived at 7:10 PM and euthanasia was advised. Pentobarbital was injected into the heart and the animal was euthanised.

SAMPLES SUBMITTED

1 x dead juvenile male long nosed fur seal, *Arctocephalus forsteri*

NECROPSY FINDINGS

There are mild to moderate post-mortem autolytic changes.

Animal is in very poor body condition, there is minimal subcutaneous fat (blubber), and the animal weighs 4.6 kg. There is no abdominal or retroperitoneal fat. There is marked atrophy of the intercostal and abaxial muscles over the vertebrae.

The animal is approximately 720 mm long and the circumference of the body caudal to the pectoral flippers is 360 mm.

There is scant mucoid ingesta in the stomach, a small amount of pale

brown pasty ingesta and the faeces are dark brown and soft. There is approximately 2ml of urine in the bladder.

GROSS SUMMARY

Chronic weight loss

SAMPLES COLLECTED & TESTING

Formalin fixed tissues will be processed for histopathology.

A quote for biotoxin and brevetoxin testing on liver, spleen, heart, lung, kidney, brain, stomach contents, faeces and urine will be requested from Analytical services Tasmania, Hobart, and the quote will

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Owner:
LONG NOSED FUR SEAL
HINDMARSH RIVER MOUTH
VICTOR HARBOR 5211

Animal/s:
Marine Mammal

DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/02/26 19:10 **Subm.No:** [REDACTED] **Lab No.:** [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received
be sent to you for approval.

Brain and lung will be sent to ACDP for Mycobacterium sp. and Brucella sp. testing.

Fresh liver, kidney, spleen, heart, lung, brain, or apparent gel swab in virus transport medium are stored.

COMMENTS

Chronic weight loss contributed to morbidity for this animal. The cause of morbidity and weight loss is not determined based on gross findings. Could decreased feed abundance due to the variable Karenia sp. algal bloom, have contributed to the animal's weight loss ?

[REDACTED]

Specialist Veterinary Anatomic Pathologist
[REDACTED]

Validated by [REDACTED]

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PATH RESULTS: LONG NOSED FUR SEAL, (Ma) [REDACTED]

From [REDACTED]

Date Tue 24/02/2026 2:00 PM

To [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Tested on 10/02/26
Reported on 24/02/26 14:30
Referred on 09/02/26 **by:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Owner:

LONG NOSED FUR SEAL
HINDMARSH RIVER MOUTH
VICTOR HARBOR 5211

Animal/s:

Marine Mammal

DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/02/26 19:10

Subm.No: [REDACTED]

Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

REFERRED TEST

Disease/Test : Brucella sp. PCR

Specimen Type: Brain & Lung

RESULT : Both samples Negative

Comment : NATA/RCPA accreditation does not cover the performance of this service

This test was performed by: Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness
(CSIRO)
NATA accreditation number: 13546

Validated by [REDACTED] Laboratory Scientist.

REFERRED TEST

Disease/Test : Mycobacterium avium complex Taqman Assay

Specimen Type: Brain & Lung

RESULT : Both samples Negative

Comment : NATA/RCPA accreditation does not cover the performance of
this service

This test was performed by: Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness
(CSIRO)
NATA accreditation number: 13546

Validated by [REDACTED] Laboratory Scientist.

[REDACTED]

Tested on 10/02/26
Reported on 24/02/26 14:30
Referred on 09/02/26 **by:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Owner:
LONG NOSED FUR SEAL
HINDMARSH RIVER MOUTH
VICTOR HARBOR 5211

Animal/s:
Marine Mammal

DOB: N/A

Collected: 09/02/26 19:10

Subm.No: [REDACTED]

Lab No.: [REDACTED]

Samples tested as received

REFERRED TEST

Disease/Test : Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex IS6110 - TaqMan Assay
Specimen Type: Brain & Lung

RESULT : Both samples Negative

Comment : NATA/RCPA accreditation does not cover the performance of this service

This test was performed by: Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (CSIRO)
NATA accreditation number: 13546

Validated by [REDACTED] Laboratory Scientist.

REFERRED TEST

Disease/Test : Pan-Mycobacterium Taqman Assay
Specimen Type: Brain & Lung

RESULT : Both samples Negative

Comment : NATA/RCPA accreditation does not cover the performance of this service

This test was performed by: Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness
(CSIRO)
NATA accreditation number: 13546

Validated by [REDACTED] Laboratory Scientist.

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CERTIFICATE OF ANALYSIS

Customer:

Address:

Contact:

Submission Description:

Sample Received Date:

Contract Number:

Client Order Number:

Long-nosed Fur Seal

11/03/2026

Sample(s) analysed as received. Sampling date and time data supplied by the client. The document shall not be reproduced except in full.

Additional information relating to this submission can be found in the sample receipt notification.

This report supersedes any previous reports with this submission number.

Many tests specify a holding time which gives the recommended timeframe by which a sample should be preserved/extracted and/or analysed after the sample is taken.

Holding time information can be found on the AST website <https://analyticalservices.tas.gov.au/our-services/containers-samples-and-submissions>.

Whilst every effort is made to analyse samples within these timeframes, situations can occur where this is not possible.

Where a test has been conducted outside the recommended sample holding time this should be taken into account when interpreting results.

The results in this report were authorised by:

Name	Position	Name	Position
	Chemist		Section Head - Organic Chemistry

Test Information:

Method ID	Test Description	Date Commenced:
3411	Lipophilic Toxins in Shellfish by LC-MS/MS	07-05-2026
3411A	Brevetoxins in Shellfish by LC-MS/MS	24-04-2026
3416	PST in Biota by LC-MS/MS (Boundy Method)	07-05-2026



Sample Comments

Sample Number: 440195

3416 PST in Biota by LC-MS/MS (Boundy Method)
TTX was detected in Sample 440195 at a concentration of 0.06 mg/kg.

IS- Insufficient Sample
* NATA accreditation does not cover this result

Chemistry Test Results (Biota - Food)

Sample Description			BRAIN	LUNG	KIDNEY	SPLEEN	STOMACH CONTENT	HEART	LIVER	FAECES
Sampled Date/ Time			09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00
Method ID	Analyte	Units	440188	440189	440190	440191	440192	440193	440194	440195
3411	AZA1	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	AZA2	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	AZA3	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	Domoic Acid	mg/kg WMB	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	*IS*	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05
	DTX1 Free	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	DTX1 Total	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	DTX2 Free	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	DTX2 Total	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	GYM	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	Homo-YTX	mg/kg WMB	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	OA Free	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	OA Total	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	PnTx-G	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	PTX2	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	0.05
	SPX1	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	Total DST	OA eq. mg/kg	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	YTX	mg/kg WMB	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
3411A	Brevetoxin 1	mg/kg WMB	<0.10*	<0.10*	<0.10*	<0.10*	*IS*	<0.10*	<0.10*	<0.10*
	Brevetoxin 2	mg/kg WMB	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	*IS*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*
	Brevetoxin 3	mg/kg WMB	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	*IS*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*
3416	C1	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	C2	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	C3	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	C4	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	dcGTX1	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	*IS*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*
	dcGTX2	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	dcGTX3	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02

IS- Insufficient Sample

* NATA accreditation does not cover this result

Chemistry Test Results (Biota - Food)			Sample Description	BRAIN	LUNG	KIDNEY	SPLEEN	STOMACH CONTENT	HEART	LIVER	FAECES
			Sampled Date/ Time	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00	09/02/26 0:00
Method ID	Analyte	Units		440188	440189	440190	440191	440192	440193	440194	440195
3416	dcGTX4	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*	*IS*	<0.02*	<0.02*	<0.02*
	dcNEO	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	dcSTX	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	doSTX	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.01*	<0.01*	<0.01*	<0.01*	*IS*	<0.01*	<0.01*	<0.01*
	GTX1	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	GTX2	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	GTX3	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	GTX4	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
	GTX5	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	GTX6	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	NEO	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	*IS*	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02
	STX	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg		<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	*IS*	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01
Total PST			STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.10	<0.10	<0.10	<0.10	*IS*	<0.10	<0.10	<0.10

IS- Insufficient Sample

* NATA accreditation does not cover this result

Chemistry Test Results (Biota - Food)

Sample Description

URINE

Sampled Date/ Time

09/02/26 0:00

Method ID	Analyte	Units	441234
3411	AZA1	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	AZA2	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	AZA3	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	Domoic Acid	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	DTX1 Free	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	DTX1 Total	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	DTX2 Free	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	DTX2 Total	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	GYM	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	Homo-YTX	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	OA Free	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	OA Total	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	PnTx-G	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	PTX2	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	SPX1	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
	Total DST	OA eq. mg/kg	*IS*
	YTX	mg/kg WMB	*IS*
3411A	Brevetoxin 1	mg/kg WMB	<0.10*
	Brevetoxin 2	mg/kg WMB	<0.02*
	Brevetoxin 3	mg/kg WMB	<0.02*
3416	C1	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01
	C2	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	C3	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	C4	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	dcGTX1	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02*
	dcGTX2	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	dcGTX3	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02

IS- Insufficient Sample

* NATA accreditation does not cover this result

Chemistry Test Results (Biota - Food)		Sample Description	URINE
		Sampled Date/ Time	09/02/26 0:00
Method ID	Analyte	Units	441234
3416	dcGTX4	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02*
	dcNEO	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	dcSTX	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01
	doSTX	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01*
	GTX1	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01
	GTX2	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01
	GTX3	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01
	GTX4	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01
	GTX5	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	GTX6	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	NEO	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.02
	STX	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.01
	Total PST	STX.2HCl eq. mg/kg	<0.10

IS- Insufficient Sample

* NATA accreditation does not cover this result