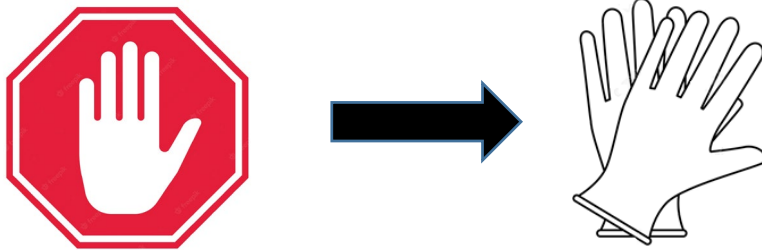


# BASIC SAMPLING PROTOCOL FOR STRANDED MARINE MAMMALS

1. Locate the carcass: where is the animal located?
2. Maintain crowds at a safe distance.



3. Assess the scene: Is it safe to approach? Is the animal entangled in fishing gear? Has it been butchered?
4. If it is safe, put on protective gloves and approach the animal.

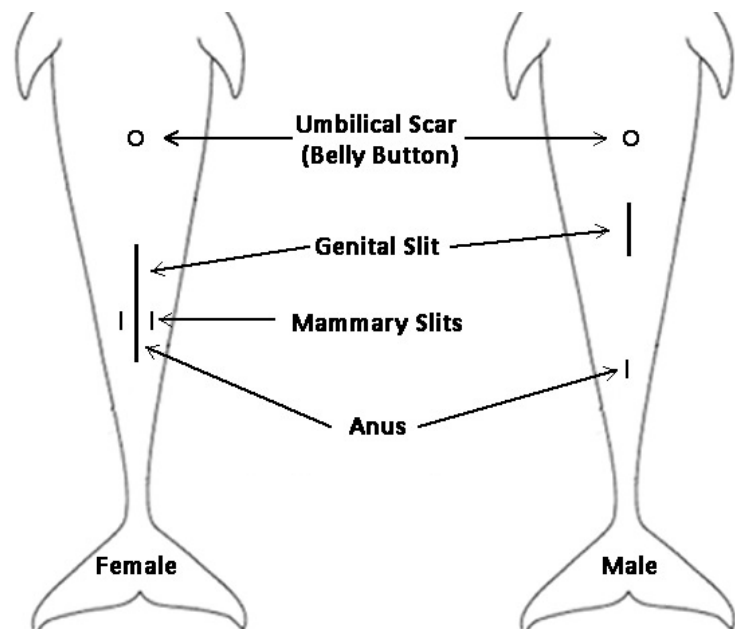


Marine mammal stranding incidents provide opportunities to collect biological information such as species, sex, and age and to assess the health of the population in an area. Document species, age, and sex if known.

Do not touch the animal yet.

Carcass state:

- 1 = alive
- 2 = fresh
- 3 = decomposed
- 4 = very decomposed
- 5 = bones



# Photographs

Photographs are essential for species identification. Put a scale label with animal ID and date next to the animal in each photo to provide a sense of scale.

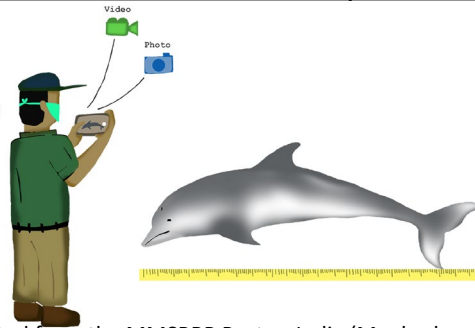


Illustration incorporated from the MMSRBP Poster, India (Mankeshwar, M., Patil, G., & Sutaria, D.)

Take a photograph of the entire animal to document the scene.

Carefully rinse off any sand for a clean view. Close-ups of various body parts and any noticeable wounds or markings on the skin should be taken. A close-up photograph of the dorsal fin can be used for individual identification. All photos should be taken perpendicular to the animal if possible.

It is ok to move the animal if needed and you can do so safely.

Initial Photo (before moving)	Left Side	Right Side	Left Head
Right Head	Teeth	Dorsum (back)/Dorsal Fin	Ventrum (belly)
Genital Area	Pectoral Flippers	Flukes/Tail	Wounds/Marks

## Measurements

Measurements can also help with species ID and age determination.

Take a total straight length from the tip of upper jaw to fluke notch.  
Make sure the measuring tape is pulled tight.

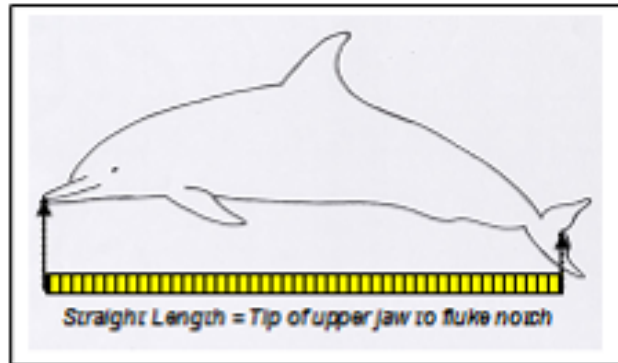
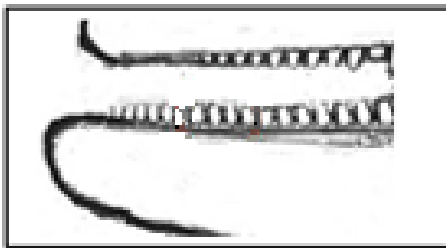
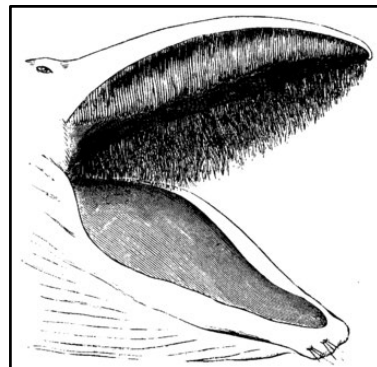


Image Courtesy of IFAW

Determine if the animal has teeth or baleen:



Teeth



Baleen, upper  
jaw only

If there are teeth, count the teeth in the upper and lower jaws. Note any empty sockets.

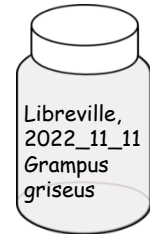
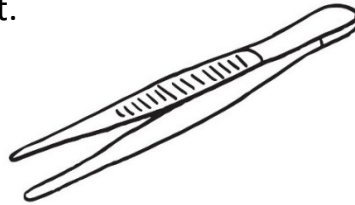
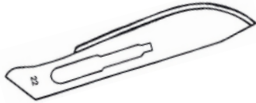
If there are baleen plates, count the number of throat grooves and note how far they extend toward the tail/umbilicus.

## Optional: Sampling

Samples can be collected for genetic analysis.

Skin:

Cut a small cube of skin using the blade and tweezers. Make sure the sample doesn't contain blubber or fat.



Use tweezers to pick up the sample and store it. Storage options preferred:

- 1.) Remove blubber, air dry the sample, put in a clean bag/jar; or
- 2.) Put sample in DMSO/salt sample jar provided in NOAA sampling kit; or
- 3.) Put sample in EtOH or strong spirits (vodka, gin)

Teeth:

If possible, remove 1-2 teeth from the jaw. Let air dry and put in a clean, dry bag or jar.

Label all containers with the animal ID number, species, location, date, sample type, and fluid used for storage.

## Final Steps

After initial assessment, photos, measurements, and samples are complete:

- Fill out the data sheet
- Submit the data sheet, photos, and samples to your project or country focal point
- Restock stranding kit if needed

Contact Info:

\*have each country fill out relevant information here\*