

Marine mammal freight guidance

The Department of Conservation has a contract with Massey University Palmerston North (contact: [REDACTED], [REDACTED]) to perform post-mortem examinations on all* Hector's and Māui dolphins.

These carcasses should be transported chilled *NOT* frozen as this can damage tissues and obscure important details about cause of death. If delivery is delayed for any reason, e.g. due to weekends, place the dolphin on ice rather than freezing, if possible. The decomposition that would occur during this time is preferable to the damage caused by freezing the animal.

Preference for Hector's/Māui dolphins is that only Code 2 carcasses will be sent to Massey, Code 3 will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (see Table 1). If unsure on what condition it is in and if it should be sent for post mortem, take photos and contact Wendi Roe directly for advice.

Ensure you take plenty of photos before the dolphin is wrapped up as the packing material can cause superficial markings during transport.

Table 1: Carcass Codes 1-5

Code	Type	Characteristics
Code 1.	Live Animal	Breathing
Code 2.	Fresh Carcass	Normal appearance, little scavenger damage, fresh smell, little drying or wrinkling of the skin, eyes clear, no bloating, penis & tongue not protruding, blubber firm & white
Code 3.	Fair	Carcass intact, bloating evident, tongue & penis protruding, skin cracked & sloughing, eyes dry & sunken, possible scavenger damage, blubber oily & blood-tinged
Code 4.	Poor	Carcass partially intact, skin sloughing or missing, blubber soft often with pockets of gas &/or oil, much scavenger damage, eyes missing, muscle almost liquid & easily torn, putrid smell, bubbling
Code 5.	Skeletal	Dry skin overlaying bone. All tissue desiccated

Method of Transport

Your two options for transport are a refrigerated freight service, or a flight with Air New Zealand.

Traditionally we have used Halls Refrigerated to send chilled dolphins to Massey, however there has been some instances of leakages which has prompted Halls to be stricter on their acceptance of specimens. If Halls refuse to ship a specimen, you can use Air New Zealand instead (this is also faster).

*Except if decomposition is so far along that determining cause of death is unlikely. See Carcass Codes (Table 1) and seek advice



Halls Refrigerated

Log a job online: <https://my.halls.co.nz/>

Username: [REDACTED]

Password: [REDACTED]

<http://www.halls.co.nz/about/services/refrigerated-containers.aspx>

North Island: 09 269 1100 Fax: 09 269 4277

South Island: 03 344 0586 Fax: 03 344 2634

We have an account with Halls specifically for contract species (Hector's/Māui dolphins, NZ sea lions). The DOC Marine Strandings Account is [REDACTED]. If you are using Halls for any other reason, please do not use this code. If a researcher or museum requests a carcass or large sample to be sent to them, either use their own account or ensure that you indicate 'charge to receiver'

Air New Zealand

<https://www.airnewzealand.co.nz/national-cargo-products-and-services>

- Find a flight from your location to Palmerston North. Liase directly with [REDACTED] regarding timing of arrival of flight. [REDACTED] will pick the dolphin up from the airport.
- Pay for the freight on a p-card
- Confirm with [REDACTED] what time the flight will arrive in Palmerston North
- Contact Marine Species and Threats team for the code to charge the costs to

Packaging protocol

Ensure the following protocol is observed when packing a dolphin or other specimen:

- Bodies should be chilled down if there is any delay between recovery and shipping (eg placed in a bath with bags of ice overnight)
- Double-bag in thick polythene 'body bags' tied with cable ties (dolphin body bags can be requested from National Office – marinemammals@doc.govt.nz) – extra guidance is available at [DOC-6110887](#).
- Include a paper copy of the [incident form](#) (DOCDM-870555) inside a ziplock bag, taped to the bagged body – ensure you fill out the disposal section so the researchers know whether they need to return the body
- Pack all of this inside a tuna coffin if you have one
- Label for delivery should include:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

IVABS

Massey University

Tennant Drive

Palmerston North 4474

Contact: [REDACTED]



- Last step once transport is organised is to call or email [redacted] and let her know who is transporting it (eg Halls or Air New Zealand), when it left, and when it is due to arrive (important for flights).