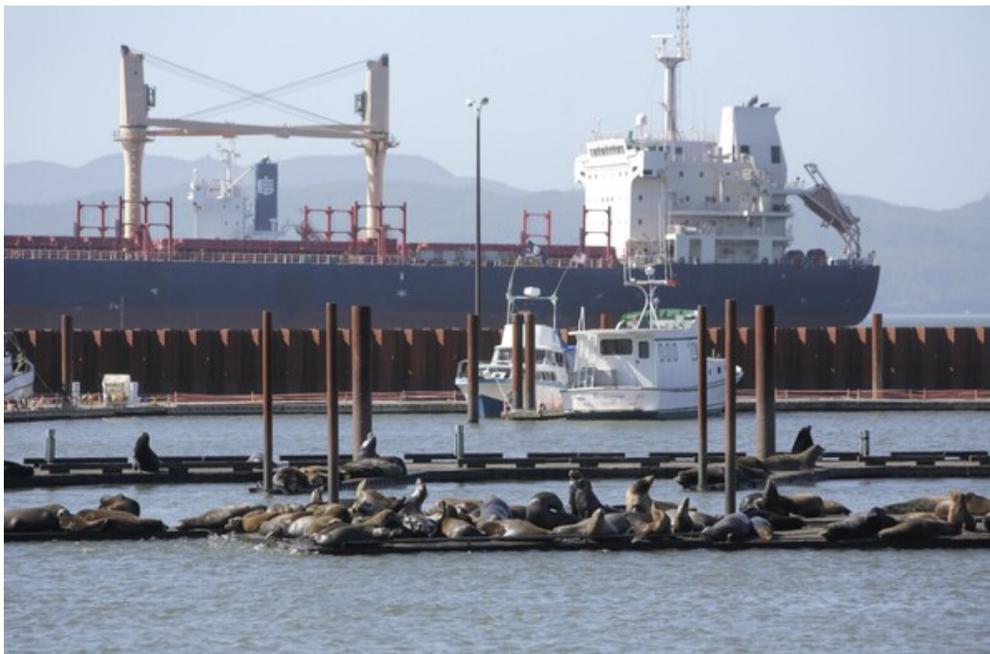


# State warns of sick, stranded sea lions on Oregon coast

Updated Oct 26;  
Posted Oct 26



Sea lions pictured at the Port of Astoria in a file photo.(Stephanie Yao Long)

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The Oregonian/OregonLive

Oregon wildlife and health officials are warning beachgoers to be aware of sick and stranded California sea lions at the coast and to keep their distance.

Officials at Oregon State University's Marine Mammal Institute said they've documented a leptospirosis outbreak. The bacteria can prompt sick or dying sea lions to strand themselves on beaches and can also pose a threat to dogs, livestock and wildlife, as well as people.

"Over the past few months, we have been getting calls for multiple sick or dead sea lions daily," Jim Rice, a researcher at OSU's Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport, said in a statement, "which is higher than normal."

OSU's lab confirmed at least eight cases of leptospirosis in the past month, largely on beaches in Clatsop, Tillamook and Lincoln counties.

It's the largest such outbreak in seven years.

The bacteria spreads through contact with an animal's urine or other bodily fluids. Dogs, in particular, are at risk of infection, according to state health officials.

If infected, animals can experience fever, muscle pain, weakness and ultimately kidney failure.

"Pets should be kept away from sea lions as leptospirosis can cause severe disease," Emilio DeBess, state public health veterinarian of the Oregon Health Authority, said in a statement.

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DeBess said there are vaccines for dogs and horses that can protect the animals against the bacteria, and he urged people to contact a veterinarian for additional information.

If you see a stranded sea lion, the state fish and wildlife agency said to stay at least 50 feet away. Keep dogs on leashes as well.

Stranded sea lions should be reported to Oregon State Police at 1-800-452-7888. Troopers share that information with pinniped researchers.

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In other sea lion news, read our [recent coverage at The Oregonian](#) about the ongoing battle of sea lion versus salmon.

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