



HW-17. *Halocercus* lungworms from a Sowerby's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*) stranded in Galicia, Spain

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Moser and Rhinehart (1993)* documented the stranding of a beaked whale (*Mesoplodon* sp.) calf in California. It was 265 cm long and exhibited a strong suckling response, and was estimated to be under six months old. In the lungs they found cysts, containing adult female nematodes and a single male. Based on the male's anatomy "distal extremities had three branches with striated alae and the two spicules each were 0.684 mm long" they identified the nematodes as belonging to the genus *Halocercus*, making this the first record of *Halocercus* parasitizing the genus *Mesoplodon*. In 2022, a male Sowerby's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*) stranded alive in A Coruña, Spain. Despite rescue efforts, it was euthanized. It was 450 cm long and sexually immature. Necropsy revealed no cause of stranding, but in the lungs, we found four nematodes (three females —two of them incomplete— and one male). The female measured 35.33 mm long and 0.17 mm wide. The male measured 22.95 mm long and 0.19 mm wide. The bursa was 59.41 µm long and 97.73 µm wide, and contained five rays: two ventral rays with one large medial papilla, two lateral rays with two equal papillae each, and one dorsal ray with two equal papillae; the gubernaculum was keratinized (57 µm by 19 µm). The spicules averaged 145 µm in length (144.97 µm and 146.48 µm). Since Moser and Rhinehart did not specify the host species and, considering that Sowerby's beaked whales are not native to Californian waters, to our knowledge this represents the first report of *Halocercus* sp. parasitizing this species. Despite similarities, the difference in spicule length (0.684 mm vs. 0.145 mm) suggests different nematode species. This raises the question: are these nematodes from a known *Halocercus* species, or do they represent a new one? Hopefully DNA will tell. *<https://doi.org/10.7589/0090-3558-29.3.507>