

Another dolphin at Cedar Point dies

BY KIM BATES
BLADE STAFF WRITER

SANDUSKY — A second dolphin at Cedar Point has died of an apparent respiratory illness — the same malady that claimed another dolphin here last week.

Cocoa, 19, died in Oceana Stadium about 8 p.m. Monday in a separate section of the aquatic tank where she was being monitored because of an illness.

Cedar Point officials said they had kept Cocoa out of aquatic shows for the previous five days after they discovered she had symptoms similar to that of Striker, 19, a male dolphin that died July 22.

"Because we knew of Cocoa's illness, one of our trainers was actually with Cocoa when she passed away," said Janice Lifke, a spokesman at the park.

"We closed all the shows (yesterday) more or less in Cocoa's memory and for the trainers. They are just devastated."

The dolphins' deaths follow the deaths of four penguins in November from **aspergillosis**, a rare but severe respiratory ailment among birds. Those animals died from the contagious disease at the same time, ending the park's penguin exhibit, Ms. Lifke said.

Dr. Gregory Bossart, a pathologist with the University of Miami's School of Medicine, said yesterday that the dolphins' deaths could be a sign of a common infection or other problem among the Cedar Point dolphins.

"Just seeing lung disease is not uncommon. But the fact that you have two in one week is disturbing," he said.

Dr. Bossart said it's too early to tell what triggered the dolphins' deaths, although he likely will be helping to review some of the tests that are being performed on the dolphins.

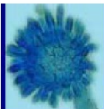
Both of the deceased dolphins have been sent to the Ohio Department of Agriculture in Columbus for a necropsy to determine the cause of death. Those results are not yet available.

Dr. Joe Walker, regional director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's animal and plant health inspection service in Annapolis, said yesterday he was unaware of the dolphin deaths. Cedar Point is required to report such incidents.

"I'm glad you called because we didn't know about this," he said.

Dr. Walker said he planned to contact the department's veterinarian for this area and ask her to

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