

PATHOLOGIC AND PARASITOLOGIC FINDINGS OF COLD-STUNNED KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLES (*LEPIDOCHELYS KEMPII*) STRANDED ON CAPE COD, MASSACHUSETTS, 2001–2006

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ABSTRACT: Necropsy reports for 28 stranded, cold-stunned Kemp's ridley sea turtles (*Lepidochelys kempii*) that died between 2001 and 2006 were reviewed retrospectively. Gross and microscopic lesions were compiled to describe the pathologic and parasitologic findings in turtles that were found freshly dead on the beach or that died within 48 hr of stranding. Anatomic lesions of varying severity were identified in each of the examined turtles and were identified in tissues of the alimentary, respiratory, integumentary, nervous and sensory, and urogenital systems in order of decreasing frequency. Necrotizing enterocolitis and bacterial or fungal pneumonia were the most frequently encountered lesions that were considered clinically significant. Parasites and parasitic lesions were identified primarily in tissues of the alimentary system and included intestinal cestodiasis and parasitic granulomas containing larval cestodes or nematodes. Postlarval cestodes were also found in the coelom of two turtles. In many cases, the extent and severity of lesions were judged to be insufficient to have solely caused mortality, suggesting that additional factors such as metabolic, respiratory, and electrolyte derangements; hypothermia; and drowning may be important proximate causes of death in cold-stunned turtles. Results of this study provide insight into pathologic conditions that may be of clinical relevance to rehabilitation efforts for coldstunned sea turtles.

Key words: Cold-stunned, Kemp's ridley, *Lepidochelys kempii*, pathology, parasitology, sea turtle, stranding.