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The Seven days stranding of a live adult Right Whale in Southern Brazil: which are the challenges in such an event?

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On September 7th 2010, a 14m long southern right whale (*Eubalaena australis*) stranded alive at Itapirubá Sul Beach (UTM 0722644, 6860085), Southern Brazil. Strandings of live whales are challenging events, especially those with adult animals. This work report the attending of this stranding as well as the difficulties and evolution of health conditions presented by the right whale during the seven days it remained stranded. Initially, the animal was in good body condition, reacting to approach of people and eventually moving its body. Immediate rescue was considered, however, the lack of adequate equipment due to whale size prevented attempts. In the second day hoses were passed around the animal's body while an appropriate boat for rescue was being provided. At the same time, due to the large extension of breaking waves (~300m of surfing zone), wave height (2-2,5m), tide flow and animal's size, there was a major concern that rescue would put whale, people and boat safety at risk. In the subsequent days, the whale presented ocular nystagmus, skin sloughing, lower respiratory rates and stopped reacting to human approach. Superficial lesions leading to bleeding caused by *Ligia sp* bites were observed in tongue and ventral surfaces of the body. Despite irresponsiveness and deteriorating general condition, the whale remained alive. Around 30% of whale's body was buried in the sand. A decision was made to euthanize the animal. The first try (4th day) was unsuccessful. Another euthanasia procedure successfully stopped animal's suffering on 7th day. During carcass recovery, extensive ulcerated necrotizing skin lesions were observed under mandibles and left eye. At necropsy, there were no evidences of the cause of stranding. The whale was a lactating female. Survival of large whales stranded during several days is rare. Information gathered on this unusual stranding may contribute to actions taken in future events.