

# ✓ Despite care, ailing baby whale dies

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Whaling

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A rare baby beaked whale being cared for at the Long Marine Laboratory in Santa Cruz died Thursday, only days after the animal seemed to be showing signs of recovery.

The whale, believed to be less than a month old, had been suffering from kidney problems that veterinarians say might have been caused by prolonged dehydration at sea.

In addition, the veterinarians had detected abnormal sounds in the whale's left lung, which may have been the early onset of pneumonia.

Researchers were taking the body to the University of California, Davis for a necropsy — like an autopsy — to determine the cause of death.

Robert Irion, a spokesman for the University of

California, Santa Cruz, said the whale had been behaving normally on Thursday, until a few minutes before its death. It then began racing uncontrollably around its tank. When it came to rest, both the whale's breathing and heart had stopped. UC-Santa Cruz operates the Long Marine lab.

Irion said UC-Santa Cruz researchers had been pessimistic all along about the whale's chances for survival.

As recently as Tuesday, the whale had begun making a few tentative swimming motions on its own. Also, the whale had been sucking food from a formula-dispensing tube in its fight for life.

The whale was rescued Sunday from a beach near Pajaro Dunes. When found, the male, 8½ feet long and weighing about 360 pounds, could not swim on its own.