

4 dolphins shot off California coast

by UPI

SAN DIEGO - Four dolphins were shot off the coast of Southern California, federal fisheries officials announced Friday.

Investigators said the dead dolphins were all young males weighing about 180 pounds and measuring 6 feet. The investigators said they believe the dolphins were all shot within a day of each other around Memorial Day, The San Diego Union-Tribune reported.

A fifth carcass was found in the same area near San Diego. Biologists believe that dolphin may have been caught in a fishing net, the newspaper said.

Mark Oswell, a spokesman for the National Marine Fisheries Service, said dead dolphins are unusual and dolphins deliberately killed even rarer.

"We get about one report per year of this type of incident for the entire country," he said. "To have five dolphins turn up dead like this in a short time span is pretty unusual."

Dave Koontz of SeaWorld said people have been known to shoot sea lions but he cannot recall a dolphin being killed by gunshot.

The killer or killers could face a prison term if convicted. The government has offered a \$2,500 reward for information on the shootings.

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