

Environmental significance of fin erosion in southern California demersal fishes

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ABSTRACT

Fin and tail erosion diseases have been reported in wild and captive populations of fresh and saltwater fishes. The lesions have been attributed to bacterial infections, to abrasion, to dietary insufficiencies, and to behavioral interactions. In recent years, fin erosion diseases have been observed in several species of marine fishes collected from coastal regions in which toxic wastes have been discharged. These regions include the waters off southern California; the Duwamish River Estuary in Seattle, Washington; and the New York Bight. In each region, the prevalence of diseased individuals was higher at contaminated sites than at control sites and the fin lesions in the most frequently affected species did not appear to be the result of an infectious process.^{5,6,7} These observations suggested the possibility that certain fin erosion diseases observed in wild populations of demersal marine fishes could be related to the discharge of toxic wastes.

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