Joint Symposium:
Belgian Wildlife Disease Society &
Dutch Society for Wildlife Health

“Wildlife crossing borders”

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&
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Organizing and Scientific Committee:

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Abstract book edited by Kristof Baert
The role of *Vibrio tapetis* in the development of skin ulcerations in common dab (*Limanda limanda*).

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Introduction: An increasing prevalence of skin ulcers in flatfish in the North Sea is noticed. The cause is hitherto not known. However, we have isolated *Vibrio tapetis* as a pure culture from several lesions. The aim of this study was to elucidate the role of *V. tapetis* in the development of skin ulcers.

Materials and Methods: On the pigmented and non-pigmented skin of 60 individually tagged wild-caught dab three adjacent areas were demarcated: a zone where skin was descaled; a zone where mucus was removed and an intact zone. The order of the three treatments was randomized for all individuals. Immediately thereafter, a group of 36 dab was challenged with *V. tapetis* by immersion (3,28 x 105 colony forming units/ml) during one hour. The other 24 animals were sham treated (controls). Fish were daily monitored for clinical signs and gross lesions during 21 days. In animals that died or have been euthanized, gross lesions were scored. At necropsy, samples were taken for histological, immunohistochemical and bacteriological examination.

Results: In the challenged group, significant more animals died compared to the controls. Lesions were significantly most severe in descaled areas and in challenged dab. Preliminary results of bacteriology and immunohistochemistry confirmed the presence of *V. tapetis* in the lesions.

Conclusions: Our preliminary results point towards *V. tapetis* possibly having an etiological role in the development of skin ulcerations in dab subsequent to prior skin damage. However, this research hypothesis needs to be verified by means of the results of the on-going analyses.