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Developing a non-invasive indicator of pinniped health: Neonate behavior and growth in California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*)

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Assessing the health of wildlife populations is critical to achieving conservation goals. However, proper assessments can be complicated when study sites are difficult to reach or when focal species are sensitive to human disturbance. Condition and growth of offspring may indicate population health, but obtaining such data generally relies on invasive techniques. Here, we examine the extent to which non-invasive observations of neonate behaviors could serve as a proxy for traditional approaches to estimating neonate body condition and growth of a wild pinniped, the California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*), in the Gulf of California, Mexico. Generalized linear models and multiple linear regressions were used to examine the effect of sex, breeding island, year, and neonate behaviors (e.g., nursing, active) on body condition and growth rates. We found a strong correlation between individual growth rates and behaviors of male neonates. Males engaged in proportionally more active behaviors had lower growth rates (

Palabras clave: condición corporal, tasas de crecimiento, disturbio humano, técnicas no invasivas, comportamiento de crías.

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