Morbilliviruses are highly infectious, are spread via the respiratory route, and cause profound immunosuppression. Moreover, these viruses cause large outbreaks with high morbidity and mortality rates in previously unexposed populations. The prototype morbillivirus is measles virus (MV), an important pathogen of humans. Other members of the genus include canine distemper virus (CDV), rinderpest virus (RPV), dolphin morbillivirus (DMV), porpoise morbillivirus (PMV), peste des petits ruminants virus (PPRV), and feline morbillivirus (FmoPV) (1, 2).

Phocine distemper virus (PDV) was identified as a member of the genus Morbillivirus in 1988 (3, 4), infecting seals as a natural host and causing clinical signs and lesions similar to those of CDV in dogs and other carnivores (5). Since then, outbreaks and individual cases of PDV have been reported repeatedly (6–8). The complete genome sequence of the strain PDV/Wadden Sea.NLD/1988 is available at GenBank under the accession no. KC802221.

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