

TWO INSTANCES OF PROVED RABIES IN THE TIGER

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SINCE all mammals and most vertebrates are susceptible to rabies, the tiger should be no exception, but although there are records in the statistics of Pasteur Institutes of instances of individuals mauled by leopards, etc., being treated with anti-rabic vaccine, the writer is not aware of proved rabies recorded in the Bengal tiger.

During the last few years there were two instances, at this Institute, of a positive microscopic finding in the brain of the Bengal tiger, the first in 1943 and the second during the current year. The brains were received at the Institute in a fixative—formol saline and methylated spirit, respectively. The biological test was therefore not possible, but with Neri stain, the routine stain employed at this Institute, well-developed and well-differentiated Negri bodies were seen microscopically in numbers, leaving no room for any doubt whatsoever. The existence of rabies, even in the King of the Jungle, emphasizes the enormity of the problem of eradication of rabies from this country, with so much of it stalking in wild life.

The first brain (in formol saline) was received in January 1943 from Dr. Hugh H. Smith, Chief Medical Officer, Nowgong Medical Association, Salana, Nowgong District, with the history that the tiger had 'severely mauled eighteen people in just over twenty-four hours but made no attempt to eat any of the victims'. He also stated that he had started anti-rabic treatment of the survivors, as he suspected rabies in the tiger. Because of the extreme interest of the case, I tried to obtain from Dr. Smith further details of the ravages of the animal, but failed. The following paragraph regarding the incident is extracted from my Annual Report of the Institute for 1943.*

'Among the specimens of brain tissue examined for evidence of rabies (*vide* table V) was that of a Bengal tiger, which was positive for Negri bodies. This is perhaps the first instance of a positive brain recorded in this species. The history is as follows: The animal severely mauled eighteen people in just over twenty-four hours "but made no attempt to eat any of the victims". It was later killed by shots in the shoulder in daylight near a railway station and the medical officer of the tea estate, who had already started anti-rabic treatment among the surviving victims, sent the

brain up for examination. This particular instance raises the issue as to the extent rabies is responsible for the man-eating propensity of tigers and, for the matter of that, for the unnatural and destructive behaviour displayed at times by other species such as the elephant. In such instances it is not only necessary to start anti-rabic treatment in the victims but also to submit the brain, where available, for examination at the Institute'.

The second instance of rabies in the same species occurred in April last, near Saikowaghat in the north-east frontier of Assam. The brain was sent by the assistant surgeon, fixed in spirit. At my request, the following information has been supplied by Dr. J. N. Palit, Civil Surgeon, north-east frontier, to whom I render thanks. The tiger was first seen at dusk on 13th April, 1950, in Garaimari village, 12 miles from Saikowaghat. On the night of 13th to 14th, between dusk and dawn, the animal had traversed at least 12 miles, terrorized the inhabitants of five or six villages and had attacked 14 persons, at least five heads of cattle and a dog, of whom one person and the dog were killed on the spot and two other persons died in hospital on the following day. The last person that was attacked in his house at Saikowaghat at 5 in the morning, managed to escape from the beast, shutting the door of the room behind him. The imprisoned animal was shot by a shikari an hour after, and measured 9 feet 4 inches.

[In this connection a reference to the article entitled 'Rabies in the Mongoose', *I.M.G.*, Vol. 68, 1932, p. 451, may be of interest. The following is the summary of the article:—

Three new cases of mongoose bite have been described. One positive mongoose's brain has been reported. Attention is drawn to a death presumably from mongoose bite in an untreated case. All mongoose bite cases treated and mongoose brains examined at Kasauli during the last 10 years, from 1922 to 1931, are tabulated.

The possibility of rabies coming into the domestic carnivora from the wild carnivora is discussed.

The suggestion is made to the effect that a mongoose bite should be treated as a serious bite.—Editor, *I.M.G.*]

AN OUTBREAK OF PLAGUE IN AN EPIDEMIC FORM TREATED WITH STREPTOMYCIN AND SULFADIAZINE

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An epidemic of plague broke out last year at Bahnan and the vicinity, situated on the border of the two adjoining districts of Gonda and Basti (U.P.). This gave the writer an opportunity to treat plague cases on modern lines.

* Annual Report of the Pasteur Institute and Medical Research Institute, Shillong, for the year 1943—Assam Government Press.