

HELMINTHIC INFECTION IN CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS OF TAMILNADU

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In captive elephants, helminthic infection is considered to be significant when the burden is more, which is reflected by rise in egg count during coprological examination (Soulsby, 1982). In the present report, *Strongyle* sp., and *Fasciola* sp. eggs were encountered in the captive elephants brought for rejuvenation camp at Mudumalai during 2005, from all over Tamilnadu.

A total of 84 samples were received for screening of helminthic parasites in elephants. Out of these, *Strongyles* sp. eggs were detected in 15 samples and *Fasciola* sp. eggs were detected in one sample. Copro cultures revealed good number of larvae and larvae were identified as *Murshidia* sp. based on lengthy tail sheath (Soulsby, 1982)

Ramanujachari and Alwar (1954) had enlisted *Murshidia* sp., *Quilonia* sp. and *Amira* sp. as the *Strongyles* found in elephants of Tamilnadu. Strongylosis was also encountered in a group of elephants maintained in a private circus, Chennai (Raman *et al.*, 2000). However, no outbreak of strongylosis in wild elephants has been documented so far (Arora, 2003).

In earlier reports, *Fasciola gigantica* eggs were found in 7 of 9 samples at Corbett National Park,

Uttaranchal and in 2 samples of elephants collected from wild life sanctuary, Satkosia, Orissa (Arora, 2003).

Egg per gram (epg) was estimated in the positive samples by Stoll's dilution method (Soulsby, 1982) and the epg for *Strongyle* sp. egg ranged from 100-200. The epg count of 500 in cattle and 5000 in sheep for *Strongyle* sp. are considered to be pathogenic (Blood and Radostits, 1989). Further studies are required to calculate the pathogenic level of epg for elephants.

Fowler (1986) opined that the clinical signs in elephants affected with severe strongylosis resembled those of horses. Mucoïd or haemorrhagic diarrhoea was the common clinical sign seen in infected elephants (Arora, 2003). The animal affected with liver fluke used to eat mud and purge frequently (Bapu, 1936).

For treatment of helminthic infection in elephants, Tetramisole at the rate of 4.5-5.0 mg per kg body weight and Fenbendazole at the dose rate of 5 mg per kg body weight given orally as single dose, mixed with boiled rice, were found to be effective against cases of *Murshidia* sp. (Sundaram *et al.*, 1971; Roy and Mazumdar, 1988).

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