

OCCURRENCE OF A FAECOLITH IN A LITIGON IN CALCUTTA ZOO

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An intestinal obstruction may either be obvious and easily diagnosed or obscure and difficult to identify (Buckner, 1979). Pyloric obstruction in a tiger-cub due to foreign body has been reported by Joshi (1991). The present report deals with a case of intestinal obstruction by a large herd faecolith of an adult litigon, named "Piali". This litigon was born on 22nd March, 1982 by hybridization of a male Indian Lion "Debabrata" with a female tigon "Rudrani" who was a hybrid of a Bengal Tiger and African Lioness.

The predominant signs observed were occasional vomiting followed by gradual loss of appetite, dehydration, emaciation and restlessness. Superficial wounds had developed on the body surface, markedly on the paws due to self inflicted injuries. The animal started to pass reduced quantity of stools gradually from 28th October, 1993. Symptom of tenesmus was there for a few days and the animal ultimately stopped passing stools. The animal become totally anorectic at the latter part of illness. Symptomatic treatment was undertaken with antacid, liver extract and vitamin B-complex, along with a course of antibiotics, time to time, in therapeutic doses. Palatable diet like dove and fowl were provided but it yielded no satisfactory improvement of appetite. Parenteral dextrose with normal saline therapy was extended for a couple of days but the animal ultimately died on 4th December, 1993 without giving any opportunity for surgical intervention. At the same time her age of eleven years eight months was also a factor of hindrance towards surgical approach. It is also reported that longer a patient lives with intestinal obstruction prior to surgical intervention, sooner the death occurs afterwards (Rawlings, *et al.*, 1981).

On post mortem examination, a large hard bullet shaped faecolith, tapering at one end (length 11.6 cm., circumference length at its maximum point 15.2 cm., weight 156 g.) was found at the junction of caecum and colon. A moderate intestinal tympanic condition with submucosal haemorrhage was noticed in different sites of intestinal loop. Liver and spleen were found congested. No other gross pathological changes were observed on necropsy. Similar case of faecolith in a Siberian Tiger was also reported by Chakraborty and Das (1991).

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Editors' Note : There was disagreement among the various editors as to whether to publish this article. Scientific editor questioned publications on hybrids. Associate editor questioned whether the fact of hybridisation really mattered since the point of the article concerned physiology and may be of interest to veterinarians. Editor has decided to publish it on the strength of the latter argument but with this Note that we do not, in Zoo Outreach Organisation or ZOOS' PRINT, encourage zoos to hybridise wild animals. Publication of an article about a physical condition of a hybrid is entirely different; it may or may not be of value.

The authors' included a genealogical chart of tigon and litigon which we have not included as it is probably not relevant to the fact of the faecolith.

Fascination with freakish animals has been one of the irritants confronting persons with a modern approach to zoo management in India. Hybridising of wild animals, breeding for unusual characteristics such as double recessive mutation, albinism, etc. is very much discouraged by the international zoo conservation community. Some reasons are :

Zoo space and resources: in zoos there is a limited amount of space as well as personal and financial resource which needs to be devoted in full to research and propagation of animals which would enhance the conservation effort. Hybrids and other freaks do not contribute to conservation in any measure that we have come across.

Wrong education. Visitors get a wrong impression of wildlife by seeing such animals exhibited and even highlighted in zoos. They get a clear but erroneous message these animals are the most important animals in the zoo. Exhibition of freaks encourages all the wrong inclinations in visitors. We want to discourage fascination with oddities and encourage study of the even more fascinating natural world.

In the Calcutta Zoo where these animals are exhibited, the most colourful signboards in the zoo were about the tigon and the litigon while important animals such as sangai were identified by small, drab signs. This in itself creates a wrong impression of the importance the zoo gives these species.