

**TRAUMATIC PERICARDITIS IN AN AFRICAN GROUND HORNBILL (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*)**

SIR, Pericarditis is common sequelae of traumatic reticulum or hardware disease in ruminants. Peritonitis, pneumonia and pleurisy are other complications of this disease. The disease occurs especially in cattle due to penetration of the reticulum by ingested sharp foreign objects such as nails and wires (Jubb *et al.*, 1985). The disease has also been reported in other species of animals including goats, sheep, buffalo, camels (Blood and Radostits, 1989) and a six-month old ostrich that ingested two nails (Ritchie *et al.*, 1994). We describe a case of traumatic perforation of the gizzard of a hornbill following ingestion of a sharp foreign object that resulted in pericarditis.

An adult female African ground hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) kept in a recently repaired enclosure with fifteen other birds was found dead. One week earlier, the bird was observed to be anorexic, weak and depressed with diarrhoea. While attempts were made to force-feed the bird, it was noticed that the bird also had difficulty in swallowing.

The carcass appeared emaciated and dehydrated. The keel bone was prominent and the eyes were sunken. There were haemorrhages into the peritoneal cavity with acute localised peritonitis around the gizzard. The surfaces of gizzard and liver appeared reddish-black. A 7cm long, straight and rusted wire was found penetrating the gizzard wall with 2cm of the wire had pierced anteriorly through the gizzard wall towards the heart. The pericardium, which found adhered to the epicardium appeared grey, opaque, roughened, thickened and covered with fibrin. The mucosal layer of the gizzard at the site of the penetrating wound was haemorrhagic and congested. There was also moderate but generalised congestion of various organs. *Escherichia coli* was isolated in pure culture from the liver, kidney and lungs.

Ingestion of the wire could have occurred accidentally during feeding. Hornbills feed on small animals such as insects and lizard apart from fruits which may have been concomitantly ingested with the wire (Harrison and Loxton, 1993). Unlike hornbills, cattle have indiscriminate feeding habits, which predispose to ingestion of sharp foreign objects. In ruminants, reticular contractions causes penetration of the reticulum by ingested sharp objects leading to complications in other organs particularly in the thoracic cavity with secondary bacterial infection (Howard, 1988). The gizzard is a muscular organ, which contracts to facilitate the movement of ingesta (Duke, 1977). The emaciated condition of the bird suggests anorexia and finally death due to starvation and secondary bacterial infection. Therefore, ingestion of the wire is believed to have occurred long before death.

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