

MULTIPLE INFECTION IN A RUSTY-SPOTTED CAT (*PRIONAILURUS RUBIGINOSUS*)

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Introduction

The Rusty-spotted Cat (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*) is one of the smallest cats of the world. It is listed under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act. The distribution range of this species include southern India, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat Dangs and Sri Lanka (Prater 1980). In the Gir Lion Sanctuary, this species was recorded for the first time in the year 1991. Subsequently some more sightings and photographic evidence of this species in the Gir and Girnar range of forests have been made available. The specimen discussed here is the first recorded evidence of this species in the Girnar Mountain.

In India this species is found in moist and dry deciduous forests, scrub forest, grasslands and arid lands. There is a great paucity on the information about the ecology of this species in the wild. The captive population of this cat is about 12 closely related individuals located in some zoos of the world (Merehurst, 1993). The species is not found in any Indian zoo.

Materials and Methods

A kitten thought to be a panther cub was rescued and brought to the zoo. It had four distinct dark black lines running from eyes to forehead. It had spots all over the body with paler under parts. From the external features, it was assumed to be a Rusty Spotted Cat. Later, a photograph was sent to experts of the Bombay Natural History Society, confirmed our identification. The following table shows the comparison between some of the physical parameters of an adult specimen of this species described by Merehurst (1993).

Physical Parameters	Unit	Kitten	Adult
1. Body weight	gram	325	1000
2. Head and body length	cm	37	35-48
3. Tail length	cm	7	15-25
4. Heart girth	cm	12.5	-
5. Shoulder height	cm	5.5	-
6. Front foot pad length	mm	8.61	-
7. Front foot pad width	mm	10.89	-
8. Hind foot pad length	mm	5.89	-
9. Hind foot pad width	mm	10.59	-

Received 3 April 1999;

Accepted 28 May 1999

The kitten was fed with pasteurized luke-warm milk in a sterile feeding bottle. Milk was given every two hours during daytime and every four hours during the night (2000 to 0600). It was housed under hygienic conditions. Though it was doing fair, the overall progress was not satisfactory possibly due to the new environment and diet. After about 20 days in captivity, the animal looked slightly weak. No stones were left unturned to save the kitten, but it did not respond to any of the treatment and died after 3 days.

Upon external examination, the cheeks, eyes and surrounding tissues were found to be swollen. Upon postmortem examination, the lungs were collapsed, whereas the liver and the spleen were slightly congested. Some round worms were found in the stomach and intestines. The intestinal mucosa was severely congested and some paticheal haemorrhages were also observed. Different biological samples were collected from the dead kitten and were examined thoroughly at the zoo laboratory.

About 5g of fecal matter obtained from the rectum of the kitten was thoroughly crushed and mixed with water. After 20 minutes, the supernatant was discarded and the sediment was examined under microscope, which revealed large number of *Toxoscaris leonini*, *Trichuris* and *Anchylostoma* species ova.

Representative samples of the vital organs like lungs, liver, spleen, kidneys and lymph nodes were inoculated on nutrient agar medium and were incubated at 37°C for 24 hours. The media containing kidneys and lymph nodes did not show the growth of any bacteria, whereas those of liver, spleen and lungs revealed *Pseudomonas* organism.

No previous records are available regarding the occurrence of these parasites in this species. Severe congestion and some haemorrhages observed in the intestines of the kitten could be due to the heavy worm infection.

References

- Merehurst, (1993). *Great cats; Majestic Creatures of the Wild*. Pp. 175.
 Prater, S.H. (1980). *The Book of Indian Animals*, P.74. Bombay Natural History Society. Oxford University Press, Bombay. 324pp.