

**A REPORT ON OUTBREAK OF ANTHRAX IN ELEPHANT**

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Anthrax is one of the most important zoonotic diseases because of its worldwide distribution with wide host range and tremendous losses due to mortality of animals. In human beings it causes various forms of disease syndrome like malignant carbuncles, wool sorter disease and intestinal anthrax (Chakrabarti, 2005). In India Sharma *et al.* (1992) reported existence of anthrax in domestic and wild animals but symptomatology is not well described in Indian literature on anthrax in elephants. The present report is based on the outbreak of anthrax in elephant at Thalavadi and Thottakombai forest area of Erode District of Tamilnadu.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

During 2006 – 2009, five elephants died (four female and one male) at Thalavadi and Thottakombai forest area of Erode District of Tamilnadu. Necropsy findings revealed absence of rigor mortis, dark tarry blood exuded from the natural orifices (does not clot), rapid putrefaction, and subcutaneous swellings. Based on the features, anthrax was suspected and the carcasses were not opened for detailed postmortem. With suspected diagnosis, the blood smears were prepared from dead elephants. The smears were fixed and stained with polychrome methylene blue and Leishman stains.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The blood smears examined showed characteristic McFadyean reaction characterized by the presence of large square ended blue rods in short chains with pink capsules. The necropsy findings and McFadyean reaction observed in the present study are in accordance with the signs reported by Blood *et al.* (1979) and Chakrabarti (2005) respectively. Consequent upon the incidence, mass vaccination programme for cattle, sheep and goat with anthrax spore vaccine was launched, completing the process in the villages bordering the Thalavadi and Thottakombai forest area.

The present report is important in Indian context as it revealed the presence of anthrax in elephants in tropical climate and it obviously emphasizes an extensive study on prevalence of anthrax in elephants as these infected animals are potential reservoirs of infection for other wild and domestic animals.

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