

Case Report

A Rare Case of Fatal Pig Attack

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Abstract:

Animal related fatalities are not uncommon, though injuries and deaths due to attack by pigs have been rarely reported. We report a case of a 3 year old child who wandered away from his home and was devoured by a pig. The case highlights the importance of maintaining supervision on young children and to be careful in the presence of pigs.

Key Words: Pig Attack, Fatal, Death, Medico-legal Issues.

Background:

Animal related fatalities are not uncommon, especially, in a developing country like India. The total number of human deaths in attacks by wild animals during 2012-2015 were 166.¹ Deaths usually happen because of attacks by animals, or road traffic accidents or fear. The top five animals responsible for these deaths were elephants, leopards, tigers, sloth bears and stray dogs.² However, deaths because of pigs are reported with relatively less frequency. As per Mayer J, only four fatal cases of pig bites were reported in United states between 1825 and 2012.³ Here, we present a case where a pig has attacked and caused a human death.

Case report:

It was in a summer afternoon, when a 3 year old boy was being fed roti by his mother, sitting in their courtyard. Due to some work, the mother went inside the house. In the meantime, the boy wandered off into backyard of the house. After two minutes, when the mother came back and saw that the child was missing, she started searching for him. She found that a female adult pig was eating the child while her off-springs were standing nearby. After beating away the pig, the child was brought to hospital where he was declared brought dead.

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The body was brought for post-mortem examination. As per history, the total time that the child was missing was about 5 minutes.

On post-mortem examination, it was a body of male child. There were gnawing marks present all over the body. The soft tissues of face and thorax were missing, exposing the underlying teeth and bones with extravasation of blood in the injured area. The eyeballs were missing from sockets. The ribs were fractured and the thoracic contents i.e. the lungs and heart was missing. Multiple antemortem lacerations were present over the front of abdomen. [Figures 1, 2 & 3]

Figure 1: Missing eye balls from socket and damage to skin of face and thorax. Skin shows gnawing marks.

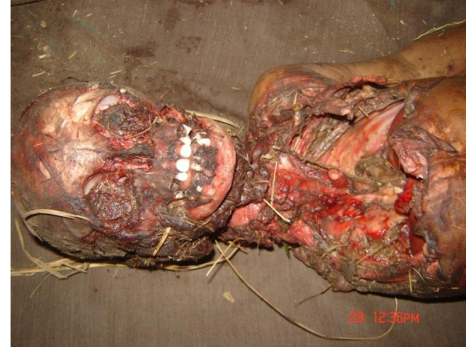
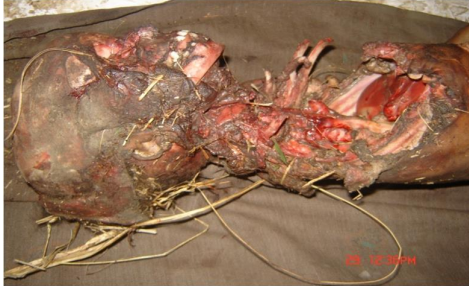


Figure 2: Fractured ribs and missing thoracic content



Figure 3: Fractured ribs and missing thoracic content



Discussion:

Pigs belong to the genus *Sus*. They are omnivorous animals. They are considered highly social and intelligent animals.⁴ Generally considered peaceful, they can become highly aggressive if their young offspring are threatened.⁵ In the present case, it is possible that the pig felt that the young boy was a threat to her off-springs and therefore attacked the boy. Injuries are caused by biting, slicing or tearing into muscles,⁶ however they may also cause damage to bones. Infections are common following pig bites in surviving patients due to organisms like alpha and beta streptococci, *Pasteurella* sp, *Bacteroides* sp, *Proteus* sp, *Ecoli* and coliform species.⁶ Barnham M⁶ states that common site of injury due to pig bite is back of thigh, due to the height of the animals and their unseen approach from behind.

In present case, head and thorax sustained severe injury while the back, upper limbs, abdomen and lower part of body were spared. This could be attributed to the height of the pig. Shearing away at the ribs, leaving the other soft tissues of the body, indicates the threat perceived by the animal, the strength of the pig and enabling the animal to do such extensive damage in such short span of time (around five minutes). It has been shown that the size and speed of large animal can generate force similar to that produced by motor vehicle accidents.⁷

The injuries present on the body of deceased and the fact that eyewitnesses, including the mother, saw the pig eating the parts of deceased, left little doubt as to any other cause of death. All injuries sustained were perimortem in nature. There was no evidence of any other trauma or poison on post mortem examination. As per the author's knowledge there is no reported case of fatal pig attack on human from India.

Medico-legal perspective:

Since long, the pigs have been domesticated for their meat and leather. It is possible that such domesticated pigs may also injure the owner or a casual passerby. As per Indian law, in such a case the police may register a case against the owner of the pig under sections 289 IPC (Negligent conduct with respect to animals) and 304 (A) IPC (Causing death by negligence).⁸ In the present case however the pig was not domesticated.

Conclusion:

This case highlights the importance of keeping the young children under supervision. It also highlights that pigs, although considered harmless, can be highly dangerous and threatening to humans who breed them or who are in vicinity of them. The owners of such pigs should be careful and should be aware of methods to neutralize this threat quickly mainly because of the power and strength associated with these animals.

Conflict of Interest: None

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