



A file photo of tigers at Bannerghatta Biological Park.

Lack of hygiene killed tigers

Histopathology report blames filthy conditions for death of big cats

BANGLORE: Tests conducted on the histopathology samples of three tigers which died at the Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) recently have confirmed that four-year old tigress Divya died due to chronic intestinal nephritis whereas gastroenteritis was responsible for the death of Divya's sibling Minchu and a three-month old tiger cub.

The tests, that involve microscopic examination of tissue in order to determine the causes of death, were conducted by Institute of Animal Health and Veterinary Biological (IAH&VB), Bangalore.

Dr C Renukprasad, director of IAH&VB said salmonella, the deadly bacteria was found only in Divya and the tiger cub, whereas no traces of bacteria was found in Minchu.

Bacterial infection

"The first tiger (Divya) and the tiger cub died instantly due to salmonella bacterial infection which damaged the organs. But there was no traces of bacteria found in Minchu in the test as the toxins of the bacteria had damaged the kidney of the animal. Despite administering a series of antibiotics, the tigress could not overcome the infection," he said.

Histopathology report of Divya and the tiger cub showed inflammation and haemorrhage in the stomach and intestine and damaged liver too.

Minchu had lesions in the kidney which had contracted and fibrosis had formed. The tigress ailed for more than a month before she finally suc-

cumbed to kidney failure.

Unhygienic

Dr Renukprasad said lack of high hygiene levels inside the holding houses where the animals were kept after Divya's death was one of the reasons why other tigers too contracted the infection.

Initially, none of the doctors were aware about the severity of contamination. It was only after few tigers suffered diarrhoea and stopped eating regularly, that vets at BBP sent blood samples of the tigers. Workers too might have contributed to the spread of the infection where the fecal materials of the infected animals was not disposed and cleaned instantly and that the bacteria could have been carried to the healthy tigers, he said.

In a recent interaction with the media, BBP officials said that they along with Zoo Authority of Karnataka were in the process of procuring 'Meat testing kits' and 'presumptive test kit for coliform and salmonella' from Defence Food Research Laboratory (DFRL).

Even if the kits work in testing meat before it is fed to the wildlife, the cost involved could be too high, added Dr Renukprasad.

The passing of the cow slaughter ban bill would push up enormously the cost of maintaining animals at the Biological Park.

The alternative suggested by the department of Livestock Production at the Veterinary College is mutton and pork, both costlier than beef.

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