

Case report

A case of Fascioliasis in African elephants

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A group of wild, young calves were imported in the UK from Africa in 1972. Shortly after arrival two died and they were found to be carrying heavy burdens of the intestinal fluke *Protojasciola robusta*. One male and eight females were moved and housed in another park in the UK. The females were in rather poor condition and showed marked oedema of the abdomen first apparent as a fairly discrete area around the umbilicus but spreading in one animal to include the entire ventral abdomen. No other clinical signs could be detected. Faeces samples were collected; no significant bacteria were isolated but numerous fluke eggs were seen. Although wild elephants normally carry fairly heavy parasite burdens, it was concluded that malnutrition and captivity might have allowed the parasites to assume a more significant role and cause the clinical signs. No reference to the control of this parasite could be found. Since rafoxanide (Flukanide, Merck, Sharp & Dohme) has been reported to be palatable and effective against fluke, this drug was chosen for the attempted treatment. It was arbitrarily decided to use 4 oz per head (this was equivalent to 3 mg/kg BW, which is approximately half the recommended level for bovines), which was offered in a maize gruel to which a large quantity of sugar had been added. Faecal examination one week later still revealed the presence of fluke eggs and the treatment was repeated. Subsequent examinations were made on three occasions at monthly intervals but no fluke eggs were seen. There was a marked improvement in appetite and physical condition though the oedema in one animal took six weeks to disappear.