PARASITIC INFECTION IN CAPTIVE REPTILES (SNAKES)

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ABSTRACT :

A total of 16 fecal samples of captive reptiles (snakes) of different species maintained at Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Snake Park, Katraj, Pune (M.S.), were examined. Out of 16 fecal samples examined, 8 were positive for parasitic infection. Out of total infected snakes three were found positive for *Taenia sp*., one Grass snake for *Echinoccocus sp*., one Banded racer snake was positive for *Ascarid sp*., one Russels viper for *Trichostrongyle sp*., one Common trinket snake for *Strongyloide sp*. and one Rat snake for *Stephaneurus sp*. infection.

KEY WORDS : Parasites, captive reptiles, fecal samples, *Echinococcus, Taenia*.

INTRODUCTION

Snakes are normally hardy animals and well adapted anatomically and physiologically to harsh climatic conditions. Neverthless, it suffers from various endo and ecto parasitic diseases which are major constraints in improvement of snake health. The health status of zoo animals varies with different factors such as management, feeding, environment, sanitation and season, thus the systematic study is required to know the spectrum of parasitic diseases in snakes, also because they have zoonotic importance as in many tribal areas and some countries like Indonesia and China, snakes are consumed by local people. Moreover, they play an important role in food chain.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:-

A total of 16 fecal samples of snakes of different species from Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park, Katraj, Pune (M.S.), in the month of January 2008, were collected in sterile containers and examined both macro and microscopically. The sedimentation technique was performed for detection of parasitic ova. The parasitic eggs were identified on the basis of their morphology as described by Soulsby (1982).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:-

The fecal samples of 8 snakes (50%) were found positive . The results correlates with the findings of Jones (1980) who observed the nematodes in snakes from West and Central Australia and Sengupta(1974) who reported diseases and parasites of zoo reptiles and Bryan and Schantz (1995) who reported *Echinococus* and *Taenia sp*. in reptiles. It may be reasonable to speculate that, the snakes might have picked up the parasitic infection when they were fed on mice or accidental consumption of earthworms or through water.

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