

Neurological Loose Motions in a 45 Year Old Captive Tusker in Sri Lanka

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Raja, a 45 year old tusker, belonging to a temple in Kegalle, Sri Lanka, was captured from the jungles as a calf and managed in captivity. Since then Raja mainly took part in cultural and religious processions and did some logging when there were no processions. As a result he was quite used to walking on roads among people, vehicles and familiar with their noise. Since 1995, he got used to travelling in lorries, which became essential in order to cater to the increasing needs for cultural and religious functions within the country amidst the reducing numbers of elephants, particularly tuskers, in captivity.

When walking along the main road in 1975, Raja met with an accident where a lorry knocked him from behind. The injuries were treated and he was completely cured, but thereafter he became scared of vehicles, noises and people. Raja developed serious loose motions whenever he was excited. He did not respond to several medicaments including antibiotics and ayurvedic treatments. The loose motion was aggravated when travelling in lorries, and walking on main roads among people and vehicles. He gradually lost his body condition and was finally sent to Millennium Elephant Foundation (MEF) for a quiet and peaceful environment. At the MEF however, Raja was not excited as frequently as before, but the body condition and the loose motions did not improve.

In 2012 August, he was suspected as having 'irritable bowel syndrome' and was treated orally with Dexamethasone (0.5 mg) 40 tablets twice daily for 1 month. In addition, "Astymin" and "Polybion" intravenously and "Vit AD3E", Multivitamin, "Katosal" and Ferrous injection intramuscularly was administered once in 2 weeks. The diarrhoea stopped 3 days after

oral therapy and the body condition rapidly improved. During the month of September 2012, paranteral supplements were stopped and oral therapy continued. One day during the month of September, there was a national event and villagers lit firecrackers. On that day diarrhoea was noted which was not as bad as the original condition. However it stopped on the following day without treatment.

During the first week in October 2012, a decision was taken to transport Raja 30 km in a lorry to participate in a religious function at which he had to parade among vehicles and people. Raja participated in the function for 5 consecutive days, was taken daily to a river, which included a 5 km walk on the main road among people and vehicles and was transported back to MEF in a lorry with no loose motion and no additional medication except for the oral therapy. Currently he is back at MEF and attempts are being made to reduce the dose gradually and possibly to stop Dexamethasone tablets. If the condition reappears, treatment with a mild antidepressant will be attempted.



Figure 1. The tusker Raja at the MEF.