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Journal of the British Veterinary Association



Gasterophilus pecorum larvae in an aged lion

SIR, – A 19-year-old male lion (*Panthera leo*), born in captivity and exhibiting a marked cachexia, was presented for post-mortem examination.

Macroscopically, a number of cutaneous ulcers with different body location, along with bilateral purulent bronchopneumonia, bilateral interstitial nephritis, superficial serous cysts in the liver, and haemorrhagic pancreatitis and enteritis, could be observed. In addition, the gastric mucosa of this lion was affected by a marked hyperaemia, as well as by erosive and/or ulcerative foci.

Microbiological examinations from lung lesions yielded isolation of both *Staphylococcus aureus* and Group G *Streptococcus*.

Many adult *Toxascaris leonina* nematodes were also found in the intestinal lumen, whereas three larvae of *Gasterophilus* species (Diptera: Gasterophilidae) were attached to the cardiac region's gastric mucosa. These were subsequently identified as immature third instar larvae of *Gasterophilus pecorum* (Fabricius 1794).

Their location in the host's stomach – similar to that usually observed in equids – indicates the parasite's attempt to carry out its own life cycle even in a different host. However, the weak penetration of larval mouth-hooks in the animal's stomach leads us to believe that the larvae would probably not have survived their new habitat and that they would have detached themselves in a short time from the gastric mucosa, thus interrupting their life cycle.

Although larvae of *Gasterophilus* species have been previously reported in other carnivora, to the best of our knowledge this is the first report of them in a lion. *Gasterophilus pecorum*-infected viscera from



equids may have acted as the infection source, once they were eaten by the animal.

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