

PULMONARY POROCEPHALOSIS BY *ARMILLIFER (POROCEPHALUS) ARMILLATUS*, WYMAN, 1848, IN PYTHONS: A LITTLE KNOWN ZONOSIS.

M.PRINCIPATO (1), G. VITELLOZZI (2), G.A.POLIDORI (1)

(1) Istituto di Parassitologia, Università di Perugia; (2) Istituto di Patologia Generale e Anatomia Patologica Veterinaria, Università di Perugia.

Pulmonary porocephalosis or pentastomiasis in pythons by *Armillifer armillatus* is a disease spread mainly in Africa, where reptiles are often eaten raw. Although this alimentary habit is unusual in Italy, it is possible for man to be infected by this disease, directly with the parasite's eggs, sneezed out from the host's nares. Pythons' porocephalosis has therefore zoonotic interest also in our Country where many fond herpetologists are. Sometimes we can see snakes, mainly pythons, incautiously touched by people, including children, to demonstrate their harmlessness. Such an attempt to make nearly domestic an animal that is not enough checked up from a sanitary point of view represents clearly a danger for humans, because the eggs delivered by *A.armillatus*, typical parasite of snakes, are extremely resistant in the environment and can be accidentally swallowed. In this case, larvae, hatched from eggs ingested, migrate along the intestine, causing severe abdominal pain and reach the omentum, liver, spleen, lung, lymph nodes in man, only occasionally intermediate host and here form granulomas about 1 cm in diameter. The present instance concerns a big African python that for its docility was sometimes taken out of its reptilium and shown to students. Since the animal died, it was brought to our Institute to effect the autopsy. The anatomo-pathological examination revealed the presence of three specimens of a female *Armillifer armillatus*, in the bronchia. In that site, the parasites had caused inflammatory lesions, characterized by plenty of catarrhal exudation easily observable in the tracheal lumen and in the bronchia. The parasitological examen of this material revealed the presence of thousands of roundish eggs, with a small hooked legged larva inside. These eggs, in a great number in the lung catarrh reached not only the proximal part of the trachea of the snake, but also its nares. Furthermore, through a simple skin cello tape test, we could point out the presence of many embryonate eggs of this pentastome, also in the nares, in the head and even internally in the mouth, on the tongue of the animal. Such parasitological exams reveal the clear dangerousness for man of an animal affected by porocephalosis, that is incautiously touched by people who is unacquainted with this risk. Besides, considering the great resistance of *Armillifer* eggs in the environment and our data showing how it is easy to find eggs on the animal's skin, we think that the environmental contamination and a little cleanliness can be in Italy, potentially, one of the possible causes of a human contamination.