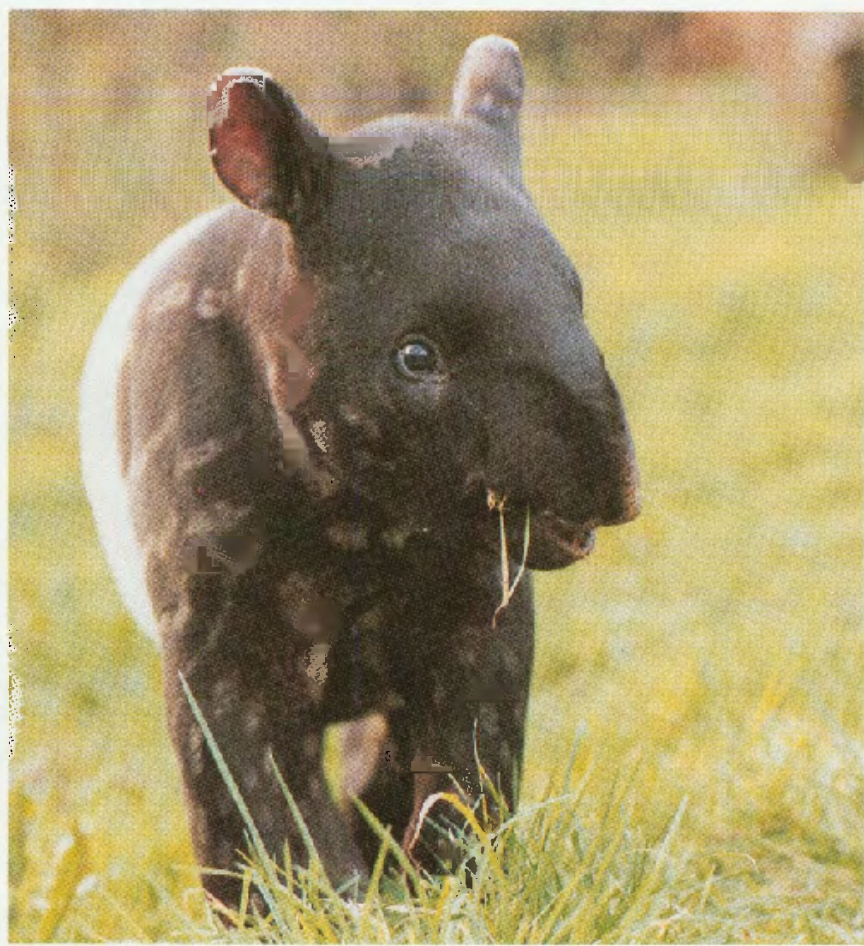


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*Friends of Howletts
and
Port Lympne*

VETERINARY REPORT, SUMMER 1988 TO SUMMER 1989

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The past year has not seen any dramatic changes in either the volume of medical problems or the range of conditions arising in the collection. The picture is one of a continual stream of routine events, most of which require attention of one kind or another.

The gorillas have perhaps fared slightly worse during the past 12 months than might have been expected, with an outbreak of chicken-pox affecting some of the youngsters. However, this soon passed away without creating any major disease problems. One or two young animals required some dental treatment during the year. An adult female, Mushic, was treated with ergometrine for continual uterine haemorrhage, which cleared up slowly. Shumba, another adult female, was treated for mastitis. The usual crop of bite wounds was examined. One baby, Matibi, posed a serious problem for some months after she apparently developed a malabsorption syndrome and had to be put onto another form of milk substitute while being hand-reared. A post-mortem was carried out on Kibam, who died aged only a few weeks. Initial findings indicated that some form of acute pneumonia had developed, and bacterial cultures produced a beta-haemolytic *Streptococcus* from both the lungs and the liver. Histopathology supported

the macropathology, and tissue was kept for isolation of any viruses which might also have played a part in the picture.

The primate section at Howlets produced an unusual case — the complete disintegration of the patella (knee-cap) in an old white-fronted capuchin monkey. A siamang suffered a fractured femur which was repaired successfully, though with difficulty. One Javan langur died of pseudotuberculosis, despite regular vaccination, but for the first time one animal (another Javan langur) was successfully treated for the same disease. A golden lion tamarin also died of pseudotuberculosis. A Goeldi's monkey required a caesarian section for delivery of a baby presented backwards, but unfortunately the baby was dead anyway and the mother had ruptured the bladder during labour, contributing to her demise.

At Port Lympne, a black-capped capuchin similarly required a caesarian section, from which the mother emerged alive and well. A female chimpanzee, Bessie, arrived from Sweden to join Bustah, whose self-esteem was badly shaken by the advent of a powerful female. She suffered a few nicks and punctures, which might be expected after such an introduction. However, during the summer of 1988

she suddenly developed a swollen tongue, which grew to such a size that it threatened to interfere with her breathing. This was immediately and successfully treated using steroids. We think this curious condition was an allergic reaction to a bee or wasp sting. A colobus monkey was third on the list for delivery of a baby by caesarian section, and again the baby was dead, but the mother survived. A female Diana monkey was treated for mastitis, a condition which this same animal had developed during 1987.

The cat section at Howletts lost two black-footed cats. The first, an old male, died from bone cancer, and the second, a female only three years old, from renal amyloidosis. Four hand-reared Indian tiger cubs were all treated for a fungal infection of the intestines (candidiasis). The first litter for a serval, Tana, consisted of two dead kittens: this was unfortunate, but at least we may expect a litter every year which will stand a better chance of survival. A northern lynx cub was treated for cellulitis of a foreleg which had developed following some bite wounds to the limb. The father of this cub lost a whole canine tooth, which suddenly cracked and dropped out of its socket; no drilling was required. The old female snow leopard, Valpuri, was treated successfully for a fungal skin infection, probably ringworm, but died suddenly before the coat had completely regrown. A large stone was found in her left kidney, and her lungs showed signs of advanced age. She was 18 years old. Another female snow leopard, Shanti, had to be sedated and given a caesarian section for the removal of a very dead cub inside her: she had already produced one live cub, but this did not survive. Two of the tigresses were given implants placed just under the skin as a contraceptive device to prevent breeding for two years.

One tigress and one lioness at Port Lympne also received subcutaneous contraceptive implants. One of the young tiger cubs born during the year became extremely ill after the food material in the lower bowel had impacted, and this organ had to be emptied surgically. A 22 year old tiger, Zombie, had to be put to sleep after her condition deteriorated badly. The Atlas lion pride suffered their first bout of serious illness when the young adolescent male developed severe diarrhoea which, it transpired, was due to *Salmonella typhimurium* infection. He recovered after some aggressive treatment. A caracal died suddenly and post-mortem examination revealed pneumonia, the first in any cat here. A litter of desert cats suffered mortality due to a feline herpes virus infection, and we now vaccinate these animals against this disease.

The old female black leopard died under anaesthesia while being operated upon for a large growth in the

mammary gland. This was found to be cancerous. A snow leopard cub became progressively more unco-ordinated over a period of perhaps three or four months. Despite all avenues of exploration, no diagnosis could be made and eventually the animal had to be put to sleep. Even then, with all the body tissues at the disposal of various pathologists, no firm conclusion was drawn, and we are left with the tentative idea that a parvovirus infection may have affected the brain cells. Two dead cubs were removed from the uterus of a female African wild dog: this was very sad, particularly as the other female also had to undergo a caesarian section last year. At the time of writing a maned wolf is slowly recovering from suspected ringworm. Among the timber wolves, a cub with an undershot jaw was culled.

The black rhinos at Port Lympne received additions to the group as a male and female arrived from the Zoological Society of London to breed with the residents here. Basha was ill twice during this 12-month period, both times due to mouth injury and infection. He seems to be prone to injuries of the gums and lips, and when this occurs his appetite drops and he begins to lose weight. Constant attention and treatment ensured that he survived both episodes. The Sumatran rhinos are in the bloom of youth and the best of health. The only occasion on which any question of ill-health arose was when Torgamba developed a mild cold and his nose began to run. The female, Meranti, was given a rectal examination, dairy-cow style, to try to assess her state of pregnancy, or rather lack of it. We are optimistic that these two will become the first Sumatran rhinos to breed in captivity in the Western world.

The African elephants at Howletts have progressed remarkably well considering the number of animals present. Rosie was lame for a short time after being pushed heavily by another female, but otherwise the group was trouble-free. A semen sample from Toto, taken as it drained from the genitalia of Belah after mating, proved that he is fertile. Another bull, Jashu (Jas), arrived from Poland in October 1988 to add to the breeding pool. So far he has shown little interest in the cows, but this may develop. At Port Lympne the Indian elephants similarly suffered little medical trouble. Davida developed a large abscess of the right parotid salivary gland, which eventually burst and drained before it too much affected her ability to feed. Motki was bitten on the tail and had to endure ritual bandaging for a few weeks.

We fared no better these last 12 months than previously with our wapiti herd. None of the calves survived, and another caesarian section had to be performed. Most regrettably, a female eland calf



became progressively weaker and more uncoordinated; she failed to respond to treatment, and eventually died. Professional pathologists were unable to shed any light on the cause of this phenomenon. Some of the deer in the main deer paddock at Port Lympne were transferred to the open ground of Combe Farm. We intend to move more deer to Combe Farm each year to relieve the overcrowding at both Port Lympne and Howletts. One of the barasingha at Port Lympne was successfully treated for a suspected spinal injury. None of the deer at Howletts required veterinary attention, but a blackbuck calf was found dead after being trodden on by a larger animal. The bongo bull, Moja, produced some semen of very poor quality when a sample was obtained using electroejaculation.

A female Brazilian tapir at Howletts was treated for an acute colic, and the group produced a youngster, Perkin, with a heart defect. At one stage it appeared that this abnormality would end his short life, but he gamely struggled on and is still with us. One of the European bison at Howletts was treated for severe gastroenteritis, and the American bison herd at Port Lympne lost an adult bull due to trauma. A water buffalo calf was born with what appeared to be either a dislocated shoulder joint or a fractured foreleg, but was left with his mother instead of being removed: he now walks well.

The problems of keeping wild animals captive in

a rural environment were brought home to us when the Przewalski horses began to abort foals. Altogether three abortions occurred, and these turned out to be due to equine herpes virus 1, which is normally associated with abortions and respiratory infections. We can only surmise, given the absence of this virus in our horses until now, that the infection was passed to one of the horses in the zoo through the fence from a domestic horse being ridden along the public footpath which adjoins the Przewalski horse paddocks. Whatever the origin of the disease, it seems it will be here to stay: resistance to the infection will build up as the years go by. During both summers there was the usual removal of colts and fillies from their groups and their mixing with unrelated bachelor herds or unrelated stallions. Also affecting the Przewalski horses was another infection, this time one which caused the deaths of four adults, namely salmonellosis. On several occasions during the 12-month period covered by this report, whole groups of horses were given treatment in their drinking water for weeks in an effort to control the disease. Animals are now vaccinated against it when they are caught for their annual hoof-trimming.

Generally speaking the health of the animals in both zoos is very good. This is due in part to the excellent standard of feeding and range of foodstuffs used by the staff, but also to the fact that very few animals are brought in from external sources, while those that are have so far been relatively free of infections.