Wild Tiger Health Centre Information Sheet

Disease threat: Fleas and lice

Hazard description: Fleas are in the Order Siphonaptera – small wingless blood-feeding insects. Lice are in the order Phthiraptera – permanent obligate ectoparasites (Taylor et al. 2007).

Host species: Many species of flea can parasitise a wide range of hosts. Lice species are generally more host specific. The species likely to be associated with wild felids are likely to be related to those affecting domestic cats i.e. *Ctenocephalides* spp. (flea); *Felicola* spp. (non-blood sucking chewing louse) (Taylor et al. 2007; Durden 2001).

Pathogenesis: Fleas and lice as agents alone are of low morbidity. Heavy burdens may occur in debilitated individuals, causing irritation and self-excoriation, or anaemia in the case of blood-sucking species . However, it is the infections they carry that are of greater concern, which are considered elsewhere. Infections include *Dipylidium, Mycoplasma haemofelis, Bartonella* and *Yersinia pestis* (Taylor et al. 2007; Durden 2001).

Diagnosis: Visual examination, combing (flea faeces).

Free-ranging tiger occurrence: No reports found, but likely to occur.

Distribution: Considered worldwide.

Assumptions: Low burdens are of little clinical insignificance (excluding the pathogens they may carry)

Limitations: Diagnostic sensitivity for presence/absence.