Wild Tiger Health Centre Information Sheet

Disease threat: Conspecific trauma

Hazard description: Arises from conflict between tigers and is generally considered to a consequence of competition for resources (e.g., territory, prey, reproductive opportunities). Male-male tiger interactions may occur when young males are dispersing through territories of mature resident males. Adult males may kill cubs fathered by other males. Where there is pressure (often anthropogenic) on habitat and resources, the likelihood of conspecific aggression may increase.

Host species: Tigers

Pathogenesis: Conspecific trauma in tigers is associated especially with bite wounds, but also with injury inflicted by claws, or physical blunt trauma.

Diagnosis: Clinical signs – highly variable.

Vaccination: Not applicable.

Free-ranging tiger occurrence: Data from the RFE suggests that bite wounds in male Amur tigers are likely to be associated with territorial disputes (Korotkova *et al.* 2012), and similarly infanticide, with cub remains found in male tiger scats (Goodrich *et al.* 2008). In the Corbett Tiger Reserve, India, Dushyant (pers. comm. 2020) reports that wounds inflicted on tigers by other tigers are common. In their study on tiger mortality in India between 2011 and 2015, Nigam *et al.* (2016) found that 42/145 deaths investigated were caused by conspecific trauma. Along with poaching, the authors concluded that conspecific trauma was one of the two main drivers of tiger mortality in India during the study period, and suggested that this apparent high rate of conspecific trauma was a result of habitat reduction and consequent increase in competition. However, the figures do need to be interpreted with caution as they may not reflect the true rate of mortality from conspecific trauma due to sampling bias.

Distribution: May increase where animals are resource limited.

Assumptions: Not applicable.

Limitations: Not applicable.