

Book Review

“Poisons and the Pachyderm - Responding to Poisoning in Asian Elephants - A Field Guide”

by Jacob Cheeran

Reviewed by Jayantha Jayewardene

The ongoing human-elephant conflicts in many of the range states of the wild elephant in Asia bring about, not only the deaths of man and elephant, but also many from both parties to the conflict are also injured in different ways. Injured elephants put a lot of pressure on the veterinarians who have to treat them. Poisoning elephants is a relatively new phenomenon and needs sharp skills on the part of the veterinarians to treat poisoned elephants.

Dr. Cheeran who is a leading elephant veterinarian in India, has written this book, which will be a great help to veterinarians. Dr. Cheeran has a very wide experience in treating elephants for many years all over India. He is considered the father of drug immobilisation in India. This invaluable book, which is a guide to all those interested in poisoning in elephants, is especially very useful to practicing veterinarians.

Dr Cheeran mentions that he had decided to provide six objectives in this guide. They are: Analytical data on elephants that have been poisoned in the past five years in India; A basis for the identification of the source of poisoning; Guidelines to forest staff, biologists and veterinarians to help identify and differentiate cases of poisoning by looking at the clinical symptoms; Guidelines for the clinical management of conditions that arise from the exposure to poison, in an elephant; Guidelines to the forest staff and veterinarians in taking necessary steps on seeing a dead elephant; and Information on steps to be taken to prevent poisoning.

Dr. Cheeran gives a step by step guide on what should be done when dealing with a poisoned elephant either dead or alive. He details out the

different types of poisoning – some accidental, some intentional and some due to the accumulation of poison in the body.

Dr. Cheeran then goes on to discuss, step by step, procedures that should be adopted by the veterinarian when poisoning is suspected. The next chapter describes the poisons that can affect an elephant – arsenic, lead, mercury, selenium, copper, molybdenum cadmium, iron, zinc, etc.

It is fortunate for elephant conservation, especially elephant veterinarians that Dr. Cheeran decided to write this book. His long and practical experience with elephants reflected in this book has made it a must for all elephant veterinarians.

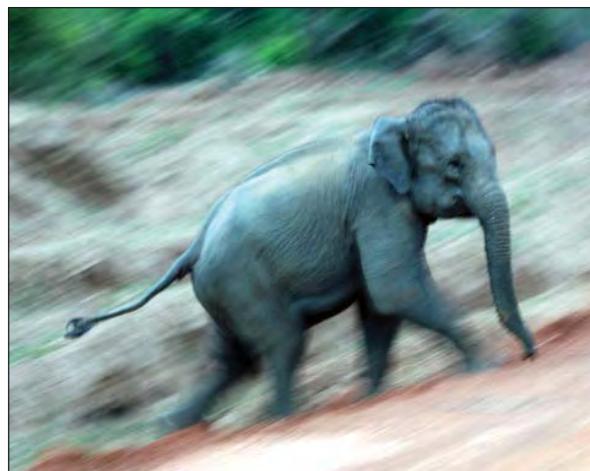
Poisons and the Pachyderm - Responding to Poisoning in Asian Elephants - A Field Guide
Jacob Cheeran (2007)

Conservation Reference Series No. 4.

V. Menon, N.V.K. Ashraf, P.P. Panda & N. Gureja

Wildlife Trust of India, New Delhi

185 pages, no ISBN number



Female crossing a road in southern Sri Lanka

Photo by H. K. Janaka