

Case report

Death by attack from a wild boar

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Abstract

Attacks on humans by wild animals causing fatal injuries are not uncommon in rural and forest areas of India. But death occurring due to attack by a wild boar is rare. As the victims of boar attack are usually recovered from dense forest areas, the investigating officers could be misled as to the nature of infliction of these multiple, fatal penetrating injuries to a possible homicide. Unlike the injuries inflicted by wild cats, canines and bulls, the hallmark of boar attack is the infliction of multiple penetrating injuries to the lower part of the body. This case is reported for its rarity, for the awareness of the possible injuries in such unnatural deaths, and for the factors predisposing to a boar attack.

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1. Introduction

A boar is a wild pig which appears similar in looks to the domestic pig except that the lower jaw has two canines protruding outwards and upwards like tusks which are used for fighting. The head and body length of an adult boar is about 1.8 m and the height is about 1 m. The weight of males varies from 68 to 227 kg and that of female from 36 to 150 kg. The wild boar of Europe is *Sus scrofa* and that of India is *Sus cristatus* which is slightly taller than *Sus scrofa*. The rut is between November and January. After a gestation period of four months, the young are born from March to May. Boar principally eats a variety of vegetations such as corn, berries, grains, roots and tubers, but it will occasionally eat worms, insects, bird's eggs, reptiles and even small animals. Its habitat borders on agricultural land. In times of shortage, agricultural crops may be raided, particularly fields of maize, turnips and potatoes. Boars are generally nocturnal and begin their nightly activities just

before dusk. They have excellent hearing and sense of smell, but poor eyesight. Boars shy from human contact and are not dangerous to people, provided they are left alone. When provoked, they are known to attack ferociously and repeatedly with their sharp tusks. Thus potentially fatal injuries can be inflicted. They have even been known to kill tigers. Mature males are most aggressive during the rut season.^{1–4}

2. Case report

A 50 year old man was attacked by a wild boar on 1.5.2002 around 7:10 a.m. in a village, situated at the foothills of Western Ghats of Karnataka State, India. The area has dense thickets, an ideal habitat for the boar. The incidence occurred while he was attending a 'call of nature' in the agriculture field adjacent to his residence. He was brought dead to Kasturba Medical College Hospital, Manipal by his children.

At autopsy the body was that of a moderately built and moderately nourished male with a height of 1.6 m and weight of 49 kg. External examination revealed the following pattern of injuries (Table 1).

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Table 1
External injuries

Region	Type of injury	Dimension	Location
Head and neck	Laceration wound	2.5 × 1.5 cm, bone deep	Right side of the chin
Thorax	–	–	–
Abdomen	(a) Penetrating wound	9 × 8 cm	Right side of umbilical region with the prolapse of intestine and mesentery, through the injury
	(b) Penetrating wound	5 × 3 cm	Left side of the umbilical region with the prolapse of intestine and mesentery, through the injury
Upper limb	–	–	–
Lower limb			
(i) Hip	(a) Penetrating wound	4.5 × 2 cm, bone deep	Over the area corresponding to left posterior superior iliac spine
	(b) Penetrating wound	6 × 2 cm, bone deep	3.5 cm below the area corresponding to right posterior superior iliac spine
(ii) Thigh	(a) Penetrating wound	6 × 2 cm, muscle deep	Anterior aspect of right thigh at its middle third
	(b) Penetrating wound	9 × 4 cm, muscle deep	Medial aspect of right thigh at its middle third
	(c) Bruise	5 × 1.5 cm	4 cm below left anterior superior iliac spine
	(d) Penetrating wound	3 × 1.5 cm, muscle deep	Anterior aspect of left thigh at its upper third
	(e) Penetrating wound	5 × 2.5 cm, muscle deep	Medial aspect of left thigh at its middle third
	(f) Penetrating wound	11.5 × 3 cm, muscle deep	Horizontally placed over the back of the upper third of left thigh
(iii) Shin	Penetrating wound	2.5 × 1 cm, bone deep	Medial aspect of left shin at its middle third

The only injury situated above the level of abdominal region was a penetrating wound situated over the right side of chin. None of the injuries were clean cut. The edges of the injuries were rugged and no defense injuries were seen. The pattern of injuries was not that which is typical of a homicidal attack.

Internal examination revealed pale organs especially brain, esophagus, stomach and liver. Jejunum showed a laceration along its mesentery, and the jejunal mesentery showed contusions. Perinephric contusions were seen on the right side. The rest of the internal examination was unremarkable.

3. Discussion

Death due to attack by boar is very rare. But there have been many deaths due to 'bull horn' injury (by ox or buffalo) in rural and forest areas of India.^{5–9} Wasadikar et al.⁷ reported that in case of bull horn injury the abdomen and the perineal regions were commonly affected. They opined that it is due to the anatomical position of the perineum and the areas being at the level of the bull's head while attacking. Here in the present case, the injuries by boar tusks are mostly present over the region of thighs. These areas are at a lower level than the areas of injuries sustained by bull horn, because of the height of the boar.

The boar has a typical method of attack wherein it steadily rushes forward, pointing the tusks towards the animal to be attacked and inflicts the injuries. It goes back, takes position and attacks the victim again. This repeated nature of attack continues till the victim is completely incapacitated due to multiple penetrating injuries, which can have a fatal consequence. The num-

ber of injuries sustained in the present case indicates the repeated nature of attack by the boar.

Wasadikar et al.⁷ reported that peritoneal violation with prolapse of viscera were present in 14% of the bull horn injury cases. Lack of bony shield over the abdomen ensue deep penetrating injuries and prolapse of viscera. The present case too shows prolapse of intestine through the two injuries in the abdominal region (Figs. 1 and 2). The higher placement of these two injuries and the two injuries over the hip (Fig. 3), unlike the low level injuries encountered in boar attacks, may be attributed to the probable squatting position taken by the victim to attend the nature's call during the boar attack.

The only injury situated above the level of abdominal region was a laceration over the right side of chin. This injury could be due to the fall on ground or the boar itself might have inflicted the injury when the victim slumped to the ground.



Fig. 1. Prolapse of Intestine.



Fig. 2. Peritoneal violation.



Fig. 3. Injuries on the back.

None of the external injuries were clean cut. The edges of the injuries were rugged and no defense injuries were seen. The pattern of injuries is not that which is typical of a homicidal attack, and the anatomical position of the injuries being at the level of the boar's tusks while attacking, indicates that the injuries are consistent with the history of the boar attack.

The direction of the injuries inflicted by canines (wolves, jackals, foxes, dogs) and wild cats (tigers, lions, leopards, cheetahs) are predominantly by their upper canine teeth and are from above downwards. Attacks by these animals invariably show bite marks and exten-

sive soft tissue loss.¹⁰ These injuries are associated with the scratch injuries inflicted by their nails. The scratch injuries are absent in the boar attacks. The penetrating injury inflicted by the boar is seen in the horizontal plane or below upwards due to the anatomical position of their tusks.

When the boar suddenly encounters man, or if the boar's territory is violated by humans, it poses a defensive attack. Such attacks may occur in remote unpopulated wilderness than on the well traveled trails where the boar is tolerant to people and is less likely to attack. In the present case attack has taken place at the periphery of populated area, in an agriculture field adjacent to the habitat of the boar, where it might have expected to find food and suddenly encountered the victim. So the people residing in similar geographical surroundings are susceptible for the attack by the boar.

Though there are many reports of bull horn injuries from the rural areas of our country, cases of deaths by boar are rarely reported. This case is reported for its rarity, for the awareness of the possible injuries in the boar attack, and for the factors predisposing a boar attack.

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