

## FOREIGN BODIES IN BLACK VULTURES (*CORAGYPS ATRATUS*)

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The presence of foreign bodies in birds has been scarcely reviewed in the literature (Grim-Fandand Korbelt-R., 1989, Entfernung von Fremkörpern bei verechhiedenen Vogeln. Tievartzl prax17(1): 57-58) particularly regarding Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*). We examined skin, muscle and viscera of ten Black Vultures (seven males and three females) for foreign bodies. All specimens were road-kills obtained in January-March, 1996, from rural areas near Maracaibo, Venezuela. Cause of death was due to massive polytraumatism of apparently previously healthy birds; and body weight ranged from 1.5 – 2.1 kg.

Foreign bodies were observed in four males, and consisted mostly of encapsulated lead shotgun pellets, number 6 and 7. The pellets were subcutaneous, attached to the dermal plane of the pectoral region, and in one case, attached to the left pectoral muscular plane, accompanied by moderate scarring. Two specimens contained 2 – 5 encapsulated lead pellets attached retroperitoneally, in the abdominal wall. However, in addition to the encapsulated pellets, one particular specimen presented a 10 mm localized intestinal distention, accompanied by scarr tissue and fibrosis. The lesion was located two-thirds the length of the intestine, toward the cloaca. Analysis of the results from the dissection of the area revealed the presence of a wooden thorn (6 mm long x 2 mm thick) piercing the intestinal wall and protruding transversally, 2 mm on

each side. The intestinal distention was produced in response to an evident obstruction restricting fecal flow. Encapsulation of the foreign body was evidently accompanied by distention of the wall to compensate for the intestinal stenosis. Fecal material was found surrounding the obstruction. No other intestinal or visceral evidence of infection or obstruction was observed; and the vulture in question exhibited normal physiological development comparable to others found in the same area. Because the ruptured intestinal wall had no serious consequences in this animal, Black Vultures may possess an efficient immune and protective system here-to-for undocumented in the literature. *Received:* 20 January 1998, *accepted:* 06 April 1998.

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