

WILDLIFE INCIDENT UNIT

71/23



Original thinking... applied

WILDLIFE INCIDENT REPORT

INCIDENT NUMBER 71/23
PART OF STUDY WIIS23
REGIONAL NUMBER W/23/15
OTHER REFERENCES 28-B0010-08-23, 28-M0009-08-23
SENDER APHA Carmarthen VIC
LOCATION Brecon
Powys
GRID REFERENCE SO0328
INCIDENT DATE 7 July 2023
SUSPECTED CAUSE OF INCIDENT background residue
DATE OF REPORT 20 October 2023

REPORTING OFFICER

SIGNED

NUMBERS AND SPECIES INVOLVED

1 blackbird
1 hedgehog

COPIED TO

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Samples received			Date received	Sample identifier
101093	hedgehog		8/8/23	28-M0009-08-23
101093	hedgehog	tissues	8/8/23	28-M0009-08-23
101094	blackbird		8/8/23	28-B0010-08-23
101094	blackbird	tissues	8/8/23	28-B0010-08-23

Summary of field data

A hedgehog was found dead outside a residential property by a member of the public. A blackbird was also found in the area. Prior to the incident, a neighbour had been seen throwing rat poison under a hedge. This is an urban area surrounded by residential properties. A river runs along the back of several of the residential properties. There are several small pockets of woodland nearby as well as cattle rearing farmland.

Summary of post mortem report

One blackbird of unknown sex and weight in fair body condition with severe autolysis was submitted for post-mortem examination. In the alimentary system, there were fly eggs on the ventral body, and a few fly eggs inside the oral cavity. The gizzard contained scant soft black material, a few fragments of tough grey-black material (seed shell?), and 4 thin pale orange worms ~1-2cm long. The small and large intestinal content was thick cream-coloured liquid, and there were ~3-4 worms present which appeared the same as those present in the gizzard, as well as multiple smaller, thicker white worms ~0.5cm in length. Examination of all other organ systems was unremarkable. The endocrine, lymphoreticular and genital systems were not examined. One male hedgehog in fair body condition with severe autolysis was submitted dead for post-mortem examination. In the alimentary system, the oesophagus was full of soft brown ingesta. The stomach had a scant fill of soft, thick pink liquid with a few short yellow fibres. The intestinal contents were thick dark brown material with black specks. In the respiratory system there was a slightly increased volume of blood-tinged pleural fluid. Examination of all other organ systems was unremarkable. The endocrine and nervous systems were not examined. The blackbird was a juvenile. The long thin worms in the gizzard and intestine have been identified as *Porrocaecum* sp.; these are large roundworms and have commonly been reported in Blackbirds. The shorter white worms in the intestine were identified as thorny-headed worms. This is the name given to worms from the thylum 'Acanthocephala' which is closely related to Nematoda. Thorny-headed worms have been reported in immature blackbirds in the UK previously. This mixed burden of GI tract helminths is likely to have had a negative impact on this immature blackbird, but the extent to which the parasitism may have contributed to the bird's death is difficult to determine. The bird was in fair condition with moderate pectoral musculing. The hedgehog was an adult male in fair body condition. Although the stomach was almost empty, the oesophagus was full of ingesta indicating that the hedgehog had eaten close to the time of death. The cause of death of the hedgehog was not determined from gross post-mortem.

Analysis : metaldehyde & carb (LC) analysis suite

101093	no metaldehyde & carb (LC) detected	detection limit	0.2	mg/kg
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Analysis : rodenticide & chloralose analysis suite

101093	difenacoum	confirmed	0.0093	mg/kg
101093	bromadiolone	confirmed	0.066	mg/kg

Conclusion

It was suspected that the hedgehog and blackbird had been poisoned. A member of public had reportedly scattered suspected rodenticide bait at the base of a hedge nearby. Laboratory analysis for a range of likely pesticides has been undertaken on the submitted samples from the hedgehog only. These tests have detected and confirmed residues of difenacoum and bromadiolone in the liver of this hedgehog. However, the amounts found are consistent with exposure only and is not considered to be the cause of death of the hedgehog. Therefore, the cause of death of the hedgehog and the blackbird remains uncertain.

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