OUTBREAKS OF POXVIRUS INFECTIONS IN HOUSED NILE CROCODILES (CROCODYLUS NILOTICUS)

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There are a few reports on viral diseases affecting reptiles. An adenovirus like infection in Nile crocodiles has been described by Jacobson et al. (1984). Recently, outbreaks of poxvirus infections in Nile crocodiles have been reported in South Africa by Horner (1988) and Huchzermeyer et al. (1991) and in Zambia by Pandey et al. (1990).

Commercial crocodile farming is of great potential in developing countries like Kenya as it can be a source of meat for the rapidly increasing population as well as a foreign exchange earner from the export of valuable crocodile skin. Diseases, however, pose a particular problem as the farmer and veterinarians are unaccustomed to reptilian diseases.

Results and Discussion

The first signs of illness started as eye infections with discharge on the 21 day of the experiments. Some of the eyes infected improved later on after treatment with tetracycline eye ointment but many of them eventually lost one eye.

The skin disease started from the base of the tail at about the 4th scale caudally on the ventral side. The lesions had a tendency to spread both caudally and anteriorly. On the head, the lesions involved the lower jaw, lips and then spread to the buccal cavity and eventually to the ear lobes. The lesions themselves were discrete and rounded. They started as small round elevated nodules which dried in the centre leaving a crater-like lesion with a dry raised edge surrounding a hollow centre (Fig-1). They measured 3mm-5mm. There were very many lesions ventrally