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National Tiger Conservation Authority
(Statutory Body under the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India)

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To

The Chief Wildlife Warden(s)

All Tiger Reserve States

Sub: Declaring big cats as man eaters

Sir,

I am enclosing a copy of the guidelines issued in the past for declaration of big cats as man eaters. This may be read with the following additional guidelines for dealing with instances relating to the subject:

(a) Preventive measures

- (i) Declaring the peripheral areas of the core or critical tiger habitat as a buffer zone for its management as a multiple use area, as required under section 38V of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, for reducing man-wild animal conflicts.
- (ii) Preparing a Tiger Conservation Plan as provided in the guidelines of the NTCA vide technical document No. NTCA/01/07, for mainstreaming wildlife concerns in the tiger landscape amongst various sectors operating in the area, with reciprocal commitments.
- (iii) Ensuring active, ecologically sustainable, integrated development for the benefit of local people living in the area, based on village specific micro plans with reciprocal commitments through village level committees (Ecodevelopment Committees) on a quid-pro-quo basis, as provided in NTCA guidelines (technical document No. NTCA/01/07).
- (iv) Keeping track of cattle depredation by carnivores through wireless on a daily basis, and ensuring timely compensation to affected people.
- (v) Monitoring movement of wild carnivores near human habitations through "impression pads" created near water points and other sensitive areas, and maintaining a record of such village level monitoring in the Gram Sabha / Panchayat / EDC.
- (vi) Alerting / sensitizing local people appropriately, including safe disposal of livestock carcass and other garbage, to prevent habituation of wild carnivores like panther from frequenting and subsequently becoming resident in the area.

(b) Control measures

- (i) Deployment of tracking squads comprising of frontline staff and experienced local people, and plotting day-to-day movement of the aberrant wild carnivore (preferably using GPS in the GIS domain).
- (ii) Deployment of a “watch team” for patrolling the affected village area during night, involving the EDC/Panchayat, while using simple repelling techniques like crackers, light, etc.
- (iii) Deployment of elephant squads, if available.
- (iv) Deployment of local workforce to prevent local people from trespassing the affected area.
- (v) Using camera traps / impression pads for collecting field evidences relating to the wild carnivore for arriving at an inference.
- (vi) Constituting an advisory committee comprising of field staff, experienced trackers and NGOs for obtaining advice relating to identity / sex of the aberrant wild carnivore causing depredation, especially for ascertaining its sex, age, physical deformity and other related parameters.
- (vii) In case of recurring human depredation in quick succession, use of dummies with a bent posture inside trap cages for trapping the aberrant animal (such traps, with inbuilt mechanism for automatic closure after animal entry, should be placed at several sensitive areas).
- (viii) In collaboration with the Revenue Authorities, alerting local people for taking necessary precautions, apart from deploying squads to prevent people from trespassing the affected areas.

It is reiterated, all efforts should be made for live trapping of the aberrant animal, either through trap cages or using chemical immobilization, before deciding on its elimination.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr. Rajesh Gopal)
IGF & Member Secretary
National Tiger Conservation Authority

Copy to: The Field Director(s) – All Tiger Reserve States

(Dr. Rajesh Gopal)
IGF & Member Secretary
National Tiger Conservation Authority

Guidelines for declaration of bigger cats as man –eaters

Both tiger and panther are included in scheduled I of the Wildlife (Protection/) Act, 1972 and have been given full protection against hunting under section 9 (1). They can be hunted only if they become dangerous to human life or if they are so disabled or diseased as to be beyond recovery. Under section 11 (1) (a), only the Chief Wildlife Warden has been given the authority to permit any person to hunt such as animal and before doing so, he has to state in writing the reasons thereof. Tigers and panthers turned man eaters on the past and continue to do so even now. In spite of several theories being propounded about the non-existence of man-eaters, it is a stark reality that tigers and panthers turn man-eaters and action is to be taken to remove the menace to human life. It is not intended to give here the various reasons and circumstances that turn these animals into man-eaters, but the fact has to be recognized that tigers and panthers do turn into man-eaters and it is necessary to lay down some guidelines to help the Chief Wildlife Wardens in deciding the circumstances and the stage at which an animal could be declared a man-eater. The following guidelines are indicated:

It is necessary to differentiate between man-killing and man-eating. There are several circumstances under which human beings are attacked accidentally by tigers and panthers and may as a result die, but these cases are to be considered only as accidental killings. Such circumstances include.

- (i) Approach by man to an area when a tigress is sheltering her cubs.
- (ii) Approach accidentally to a sleeping tiger/tigress specially by grass cutters, wood collectors, etc.
- (iii) A bent-in posture by man when a tiger takes him to be an animal and attacks. In such cases, the tiger/tigress does not eat the dead person in the first case, but it may start eating the dead body if the tiger/tigress come across such accidents more than once. If the tigress is with cubs and is confined to a limited area with shortage of natural prey, she is more prone to eat the dead body. The mere fact that the dead body has been eaten does not prove that the animal is a man-eater. Similarly, the fact that a particular animal has killed more than one human being also does not prove it to be a man –eater. The circumstances under which the animal killed the human being has to be examined in detail to arrive at any conclusion.

If a tiger/panther begins to seek out, stalk and wait for human beings and has after killing a person, eaten the dead body, it is established beyond doubt that the animal has turned into a man-eater. It is not necessary in such cases to wait till several human lives are lost. It may be difficult to establish such cases after the first case, but after the second case of human kill it can easily be decided if the animal has turned into a man-eater.

The place where the human kills take place should also work as a guide. In certain area, where forests are disturbed due to intensive working, grazing or fire, tigresses tend to move to adjoining sugarcane fields to litter. Labour and farmers working in the sugarcane fields get killed by such tigresses, and their dead body is eaten by them. As given in para (1), such animals are not to be considered man-eaters. But in case, a tiger starts living in such sugarcane fields, he is more likely to turn into a man –eater, as he goes out there for food. He seeks after pigs and animals in the field and can kill and eat human beings also.

A male tiger killing a human being near a village or in sugarcane field will in all probability be a man-eater.

This evidence should not be used against panthers, which usually live close to villages and move in the night even though the village in search of dogs, unless the panther has begun to lie in wait for human beings.

Even if enough evidence has not come forth to establish an animal as a man-eater, but there are definite grounds to suspect after one human kill that the animal has the tendency to turn into a menace, steps should be taken to trap it. Trapping of panthers will not be difficult, but may be so in the case of tigers. Efforts to tranquilise such animals should start immediately.

Where it is established that the animal is a man-eater, it has to be declared so without delay and steps should be taken to destroy the animal. Efforts to trap and tranquilise the animal should, however, continue along with the steps taken to destroy it. But in no case efforts to destroy it should slacken for the sake of trapping or tranquilising to succeed.

When a tiger has been declared a man-eater, only experienced and senior forest officers should be authorized to destroy it. In no case permits should be given to others. There is such a heavy demand from shikaris and others to get a permit to destroy man-eating tigers that they bring heavy pressure, both political and otherwise on the authorities to declare a tiger as a man-eater. To remove the chances of such pressures working against innocent tigers, it is necessary to eliminate outside from getting any permit for their destruction. This also destruction of only the genuine man-eater.

In the case of panthers, operating in hilly tracts, it may be necessary to take the help of experienced shikaris, as young and experienced persons are needed to operate in these hilly areas. On account of complete ban on hunting of tigers and panthers since that last one decade, and also due to the rise in the price of arms and ammunitions, it is difficult to find a young forest officer, with adequate experienced who can be authorized to destroy the man-eater. Unlike the case of a man-eating tigers, where age does not work as a handicap and where middle-aged forest officers can take care of the animal in the plains, the man-eating panther needs an agile and young shikari who can over miles and miles of difficult hilly terrain on foot.

No authority other than the Chief Wildlife Warden is legally competent to permit any one to hunt such animals. Cases have, however, occurred where civil authorities have unofficially authorized and encouraged hunting of such animals by shikaris, experienced and otherwise, leading to a 'free-for all' in the area of operation. Such irresponsible action on the part of any authority should be severely dealt with by the Government, as it leads not only to the destruction of several innocent animals, but may create more man-eaters through injury caused by these shikaris.

Normally no reward should be announced or given for the destruction of man-eaters. Where it is necessary to engage a shikari, who cannot himself take care of the financial burden involved in the operation, all assistance and material help should be provided to him by the Government. Government may also consider the release of the trophy of the animal destroyed in favour of the hunter (GOI).