LETTER TO THE EDITOR: POSSIBLE VACCINATION AGAINST ASPERGILLOSIS

Sir:

A recent report from the Nuffield Unit of Comparative Medicine in London may possibly be of significance to those who keep raptors in captivity, whether for falconry or for research.

The report (Journal of Zoology 166(4):587, April 1972) describes successful attempts by Dr. G. R. Smith of the Nuffield Unit to produce immunity in mice to the fungus Aspergillus fumigatus. Dr. Smith achieved this by vaccinating the mice with either a sublethal intra-venous dose of washed living spores or a killed whole culture of A. fumigatus. The protection produced was only of short duration and depended upon the size of both vaccine and challenge doses but, nevertheless, the results are encouraging and suggest that effective vaccination of mice against aspergillosis might eventually be possible.

Aspergillosis is probably the commonest cause of death in captive birds of prey (Cooper, 1969; Keymer, 1972). Treatment with antifungal drugs has been tried with some apparent degree of success (e.g., Beebe and Webster, 1964; Glasier, 1968), but have been hampered by the difficulties of an accurate diagnosis (Cooper, 1972). Control has therefore largely depended upon prevention, mainly by reducing the *Aspergillus* spore content in the bird's environment and, also, to some extent, the prophylactic administration of an antifungal aerosol. Such measures are probably of value but are certainly not the answer to the problem.

The purpose of this letter is to draw attention to Dr. Smith's work and to suggest that similar investigations into the vaccination of birds against *Aspergillus fumigatus* might prove of value.

Such work could commence in poultry and, later, if results proved at all encouraging, might be extended to raptors.

Yours faithfully,

John E. Cooper Veterinary Services Division P.O. Kabete, Kenya 24th July, 1972

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