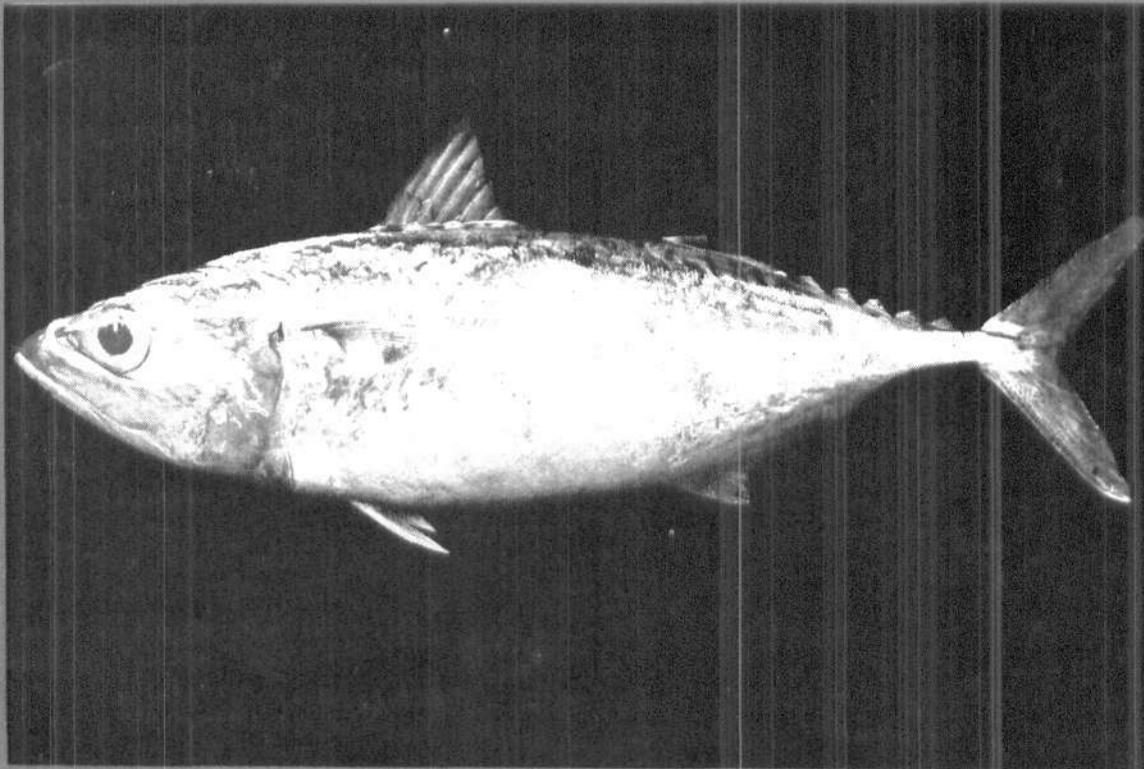




MARINE FISHERIES INFORMATION SERVICE



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THE MARINE FISHERIES INFORMATION SERVICE: Technical and Extension Series envisages the rapid dissemination of information on marine and brackish water fishery resources and allied data available with the National Marine Living Resources Data Centre (NMLRDC) and the Research Divisions of the Institute, results of proven researches for transfer of technology to the fish farmers and industry and of other relevant information needed for Research and Development efforts in the marine fisheries sector.

Abbreviation - *Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv. T & E Ser.*, No. 63: 1985

FISH FOOD POISONING AT BALLY, HOWRAH*

On 17-6-1984, in the morning, a trader brought a basket of puffer fish (*Tetradon* sp.) to Ghoshpara, Bally, about 10 km from Howrah railway station and offered the fish for sale at the rate of Rs. 4/- per kg. The fish was quite new to the place. After the heavy rains and floods in the area from the end of first week of June there was a sudden hike in the price of fish in the market and the poor and middle class families were starved of fish. Therefore there was great demand for the puffer fish offered at a low price. Quite unaware of the death trap, about 49 families in the surrounding areas bought the fish. According to the information collected from the victims, some of the fish contained matured eggs. The fish were cooked after peeling off the skin. The eggs as well as abdominal fat were fried— in some cases with powdered gram ('basan'). The fish being cheap, each person consumed 75-100 g of flesh with their mid-day meals.

From 2 P.M. onwards fish food poisoning victims from all castes, age groups and from both the sexes started pouring in at Uttarpura General Hospital, about 2 km from Bally (Tables 1 & 2). Altogether 101 victims arrived in the same day, out of which, two were declared dead on arrival. The rush of the victims was so heavy that the doctors could not cope up with recording symptoms of individual cases.

The general symptoms were uneasiness, giddiness and loss of general senses. According to the symptoms, effect of the poison was neurotoxic acting on central

nervous system. Vomiting was reported in a few cases, and those who vomitted suffered less and did not die. Those who were more affected appeared to have eaten more or eaten on empty stomach. On the following day, i.e. 18-6-1984 another 23 persons were also admitted to the hospital. The admissions on the second day were more out of fear among people after the spread of fish food poisoning news. All were released from the hospital on 19-6-1984. It appeared that almost all the people who ate the fish turned upto the hospital. Majority of the victims were within 20 years of age. An age-wise analysis of the victims was: upto 20 years (68); between 21 & 50 years (49); and between 50 & 80 years (7).

There was acute convulsion in one case, and an unusual high dose of four calmpose injections within 15 minutes were administered to save the patient. The following treatment was prescribed in all the cases.

1. Dextrose 5% I.V.
2. Atropine
3. Decadron
4. Coramine
5. Calmpose

Besides the two brought dead to the hospital on 17th June, five others died in the hospital on the same day after receiving treatment for a short period as indicated in the table. Out of the seven persons dead, four were from the same family at Coomilapara and the other three were from two families at Ghoshpara. The dead persons were of different ages, from four year old child to 50 year old man. In a family of eight persons, seven survived after treatment but a child succumbed.

* Prepared by S. S. Dan, Field Centre of CMFRI, Contai, W. Bengal.

Table 1. Number of families and victims in different localities of Bally, affected by eating puffer fish

Locality	No. of families	No. of victims	Males	Females	Children within 12 years	No. dead	Remarks
Nischinta colony	2	5	3	2	3	—	—
Coomillapara	7	21	12	9	8	4	four dead from same family
Shyamaprasadpally	2	6	4	2	2	—	—
Ghoshpara	20	55	33	22	17	3	three dead from same family
Santinagar	2	8	4	4	4	—	—
Ma Saradapally	4	8	3	5	3	—	—
Ramachandrapur	2	4	2	2	1	—	—
Shrinagar colony	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Sapripara	2	2	—	2	1	—	—
Anandanagar	2	2	—	2	—	—	—
Motinagar colony	5	12	8	4	3	—	—
TOTAL	49	124	69	55	42	7	

Table 2. Particulars of victims who died after eating puffer fish

Name of victim	Locality	Age	Sex	Date & time of hospitalisation	Date & time of expiry	Remarks
Dulal Das	Coomilla-para	20	M	17-6-1984 1455 hrs	17-6-1984 2040 hrs	Fell sick in hospital, giddiness, pulse subnormal, pupil reacting to light. No loss of consciousness.
Jiban Das	-do-	50	M	17-6-1984 1500 hrs	17-6-1984 1600 hrs	Symptoms not recorded.
Kachi Das	-do-	18	F	17-6-1984 1500 hrs	17-6-1984 17 hrs	-do-
Sambhu Das	-do-	22	M	—	—	Brought dead to hospital.
Prabir Bose	Ghoshpara	17	M	17-6-1984 1430 hrs	17-6-1984 1525 hrs	Symptoms not recorded.
Geeta Bose	-do-	35	F	—	—	Brought dead to hospital
Bapi Sarkar	-do-	4	M	17-6-1984 1915 hrs	17-6-1984 1925 hrs	Brought unconscious.

Shri Dulal Das of Coomillapara aged 20 brought all the other four members of his family to hospital who had developed poisoning symptoms. But after arriving in the hospital he suffered from dry tongue, choked voice, subnormal pulse and pupil reacting to light but without loss of consciousness. He expired after 5 hrs 45 mts of hospitalisation after receiving treatment as mentioned above. Three other members died in the same family.

All the victims contacted, reported that the fish

was not at all tasty. There was burning sensation as the fish passed through oesophagus. One Shri Bipul Bose was served with fish eggs and body fat fried in oil with his meal. As he felt the burning in the throat while swallowing and no taste for the fish, he did not take a second gulp of the egg and far or the flesh. He did not die, but had to be hospitalised along with other members of his family where his wife and a son succumbed. This showed that not only the flesh but eggs and oil of puffer fish were equally poisonous.

