

3. Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus

Prelims: Science & Technology

Mains: GS-III- Conservation

Why in News?

- ▶▶ Since the middle of August, a rare disease has killed five elephants in Odisha. The disease is caused by a virus called Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV).

About Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV):

- ▶▶ An EEHV information website, a resource conceived in 2011 at the 7th Annual International EEHV Workshop in Houston, describes **EEHVs as a type of herpesvirus that can cause a highly fatal haemorrhagic disease in young Asian elephants.**
- ▶▶ Most elephants carry just as most humans carry a cold virus. When EEHV is triggered, the elephant dies of massive internal bleeding and symptoms which are hardly visible
- ▶▶ Some elephants show symptoms such as reduced appetite, nasal discharge and swollen glands.
- ▶▶ The disease is usually fatal, with a short course of 28-35 hours.
- ▶▶ There is no true cure for herpesviruses in animals or in humans because the disease has a short course, this means we have to take a very quick call on a suspected EEHV case and kick off treatment protocols.
- ▶▶ **The treatment** is a combination of anti-viral therapy, aggressive fluid therapy (to counter haemorrhaging), immuno-stimulant drugs (selenium and Vitamins C, E), anti-pyretics and analgesics (to bring down fever).

Concerns:

- ▶▶ If elephants in the wild start falling prey to the virus, then treatment will be very difficult, it will be extremely hard to track down every wild elephant in the state and test whether they are positive for EEHV.
- ▶▶ EEHV is lethal for young elephants between the ages of one and 12. If a young elephant dies before reproducing, it affects the population of the species as a whole in the concerned geography.