

SUCCESSFUL HANDREARING OF A LEOPARD CUB AT MAHARAJBAG ZOO

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Abstract

Successful handrearing of a Leopard cub at Maharajbag Zoo, Nagpur is reported. The feeding of cub was done under strict sterilization of feeding bottles and utensils. Commonly recommended feed such as cow's milk, boiled egg and beef along with calcium and multivitamin supplements were given in gradually increasing portions as per the need. The feed requirement and growth rate is reported.

Introduction

Handrearing of the young in zoos is a challenging task for the zoo veterinarian and keeper. Generally, mothers nourish their young in nature or in captivity, but occasionally some young are required to be handreared. An attempt is made in the present article to put on paper the successful handrearing of a leopard cub (*Panthera pardus*) at Maharajbag Zoo, College of Agriculture, Nagpur. Julie, a female Leopard aged about eight years delivered a healthy male cub on 13 June 1999 during the night. The mother and the cub were normal for the first 4-5 days. But on the sixth day, it was observed that the mother did not show interest in the cub, which was meowing and searching for her. Close examination revealed that the mammary glands of the mother were not turgid. Considering the hypogalactia of the mother, it was thought necessary to wean and handrear the cub.

Methodology

The cub named 'Ajay' was separated from the mother and was kept in an enclosure under close observation. The diet offered to the cub is given in Table 1.

Luke warm cow's milk was fed through feeding bottle. Strict sterilization of feeding bottle, proper boiling of milk and proper sanitation measures in the enclosure were followed. The multivitamin and iron preparations (Zincovit, Ferium) and calcium supplementation (Ascal) were given. Frequency of

feeding was adjusted as shown in Table 1. However, no feeding was done during the night. The growth rate of the cub was assessed by recording the weekly body weight and gain in the weight as shown in Table 2.

The cub was released with his mother at the completion of 13 weeks and was under observation for one more week. The mother accepted the cub without any hesitation.

Results and Discussion

The zoo veterinarians occasionally are required to undertake handrearing of young animals. The reasons for weaning could be insufficient lactation (Hypogalactia of mother), inability of cub to suckle, ailment of mother, lack of maternal instinct (Saha *et al.*, 1992) or death of mother.

Successful handrearing of wild animals in captivity has been reported by several authors such as Batwe (1987), Matthews (1988), Matthew (1990), Mahodaya (1990), Mugdur (1991), Suklikar *et al.* (1991), Saha *et al.* (1992) and Rao (1995).

In the present case, hypogalactia of mother and lack of maternal instinct at the end of first week were the causes for weaning of the cub. The cub was offered only cow's milk (up to the 4th week) at frequent intervals; quantity accepted by cub and frequency of feeding is shown in Table 1. Chicken soup was introduced in the fifth week and increased in quantity up to the twelfth week. Two boiled eggs were also offered from the eighth to tenth week and thereafter, raw eggs were given up to the twelfth week. Boiled beef was started from the tenth week onwards and was continued up to the eleventh week. Then the cub was shifted to raw meat (Kheema). The quantity of milk was gradually decreased.

The cub showed normal health and growth rate during the observation period except in the sixth week when he had loose motions. The thorough clinical examination revealed normal temperature, pulse and respiration with no dehydration. It was concluded that the diarrhoea was due to the diet and hence quantity of milk was reduced and cub was treated with Sporalac (1/2 tablet) twice a day for five days. The cub showed uneventful

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Table 1. Feeding chart.

Age in weeks	Total quantity of milk consumed in ml.	Total quantity of chicken soup in ml.	Egg	Quantity of beef in g.	Frequency of feeding	Remarks
2	200	-	-	-	6	Zincovit drops 4-5, ferium drops 4-5 x bd x 1 month
3	300	-	-	-	6	Ascal 5 ml bd x 15 days
4	450	-	-	-	4	
5	600	-	-	-	4	
	-	50	-	-	2	
6	500	-	-	-	4	tab.Sporolac 1/2 bd x 5 days Quantity of milk reduced during course of treatment.
7	800	-	-	-	3	
	-	100	-	-	2	
8	700	-	-	-	2	
	-	150	-	-	2	
	-	-	Boiled 2	-	2	
9	600	-	-	-	2	
	-	200	Boiled 2	-	2	
10	500	-	-	-	2	
	-	250	-	-	2	
	-	-	Boiled 2	Boiled 50	1	
11	300	-	-	-	2	
	-	250	-	-	2	
	-	-	Raw 2	Boiled beef (Kheema 100)	2	
12	100	-	-	-	1	
	-	150	-	-	1	
	-	-	Raw 2	-	1	
	-	-	-	Raw beef 300	1	
13	-	-	-	Raw beef	1	

Table 2. Growth rate of cub

Age in days	Weight in kg.	Increase in weight (g.)	Remarks
7	0.650	-	
14	1.010	360	
21	1.465	455	
28	1.920	455	
35	2.450	530	
42	2.800	350	Reduction in growth rate (weight gain) due to diarrhoea.
49	3.410	610	
56	4.400	990	
63	5.280	880	
70	6.230	950	
77	7.310	1080	
84	8.550	1240	

recovery and the diet was then restored.

The cub showed constant growth as revealed by the weekly body weight gains except in the sixth week which might be due to diarrhoea during that period. The cub was offered beef from thirteenth week onwards.

Mahodaya (1990) reported successful handrearing of a Leopard cub with goat milk and tinned milk. Similarly, Saha *et al.* (1992) reported use of lactogen in rearing a lion cub. In the present case, cow's milk was offered as it was readily available.

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