PREVALENCE OF RESORPTIVE DENTAL LESIONS IN MALAYAN TAPIRS (Tapirus indicus)

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Abstract

Dental disease as well as facial swelling and osteomyelitis is a commonly reported entity in tapirs, but little is known about actual etiology or prevalence of these lesions. 3,4

Resorptive lesions to the roots were diagnosed in the extracted teeth of two Malayan tapirs (Tapirus indicus) by histopathology. In order to evaluate the prevalence of this problem in the species, 38 skulls of deceased tapirs were visually examined and radiographically evaluated. Resorptive lesions were graded according to severity on a scale from 0-5. 1,2 Animals were divided into four groups based on their age (juvenile/adult) and origin (captive/free-ranging). Data are presented in Table 1.

Overall, 37% of the investigated skulls had dental lesions with decreased radiodensity. In adult zoo animals the prevalence was 82% (9/11), while in their wild counterparts the prevalence was 57% (4/7). The difference in prevalence between captive and free-ranging animals was not statistically significant. Only 1 of the 21 juvenile animals (5%) was affected.

This study suggests that a very high proportion of tapirs are affected by radiolucent dental lesions believed to represent root resorption. Age appears to be a highly significant factor in the development of these lesions. These preliminary results suggest that free ranging animals are affected to a comparable extent as captive tapirs.

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LITERATURE CITED

1. American Veterinary Dental College website: http://www.avdc.org/Nomenclature.html#resorption

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Table 1. Distribution of radiolucent tooth root lesions in captive and free ranging Malayan tapirs (n=38).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal’s age</th>
<th>Free-ranging tapirs</th>
<th>Captive tapirs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesions present</td>
<td>Lesions absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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