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GIANT ANTEATERS (MYRMECOPHAGA TRIDACTYLA) TREATED IN THE CERRADO BIOME: CASE SERIES

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RESUMO

Giant anteater (Myrmecophaga tridactyla) is an endangered and globally vulnerable species. A retrospective survey of animals seen at the Wild Animal Clinic of the Federal University of Uberlândia was carried out to expand the understanding about aspects of populations of the species. Clinical records of 63 animals from January 2016 to February 2020 were analyzed. The information collected were sex, estimated age range, place of rescue, reason for rescue, clinical signs, diagnosis and destination. Regarding sex, a higher frequency of females (36.66%) was found, and three (8.57%) of which were pregnant or with the baby on their backs. The age distribution was 17 (28.33%) offspring, 16 (26.66%) young, and 26 (43.44%) adults. The main reason for rescue was run-over accidents (30%). The animals were found in rural areas (31.66%), urban areas (26.63%), and highways (23.33%). Only 8 (13.33%) animals were considered healthy. The most common condition was traumatic brain injury (53.33%), followed by fractures (33%), neonate triad (25%), and abrasions (25%). The animals presented a high mortality rate (61.9%); 80.9% of the surviving animals (35%) were released near the place where they were found, and 19% were sent to other institutions. A higher frequency of females was found denoting a warning sign regarding conservation. This result is consistent with other studies, which report high rates of females involved in run-over accidents, decreasing giant anteater populations in their habitat, which is aggravated by long gestation, parental care periods and by the fact that giant anteater females have only one baby per year . The main reason found for the rescue of these animals (run-over accidents) corroborates data from screening and rehabilitation centers in Brazil. The slow speed of movement of giant anteaters increases the occurrence of run-over accidents, as well as the lack of measures for fauna protection in roads and high-speed traffic . In addition, Minas Gerais is the state that has the longest road network in the country, which denotes a great fragmentation of the natural habitat and increases the probability of road accidents involving the species. The low number of giant anteaters reintroduced to their natural habitat and the high mortality rate of animals show the importance of measures that protect them. The data found highlight the need for conservation programs that reduce the death of these animals due to human causes, such as run-over accidents and habitat fragmentation in their areas of occurrence.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Conservation, roadkill, xenarthra

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