



A survey assessment of variables related to stereotypy in captive giraffe and okapi

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Accepted 3 March 2001

Abstract

Stereotypic behavior has been investigated in a wide variety of animals, but little published information is available on this problem in captive exotic ungulates. A survey was used to gather information on the prevalence of stereotypic behavior in giraffe and okapi and to identify variables associated with these behaviors. Of the 71 institutions that received a survey, 69.0% responded. Data were reported for 257 individuals, including 214 giraffe (representing five subspecies) and 29 okapi. Of the animals included in the survey, 79.7% performed at least one type of stereotypic behavior. Licking of non-food objects (72.4%) and pacing (29.2%) were the most prevalent stereotypic behaviors, though other stereotypies were reported in 3.2% of the animals. The results of a logistic regression performed on the data indicated that sub species, number of hours the individuals spent indoors, access at night to conspecifics, feeding frequency, method of feeding, and type of food provided were predictors of stereotypic licking. Sub species, birth history, size of the indoor enclosure, environmental change, and type of food provided were found to be significant predictors of stereotypic pacing. In general, feeding motivation appears to be related to an oral stereotypy, whereas other environmental factors appear to be associated with a locomotor stereotypy. The results of this study suggest changes in management strategies that may be empirically studied and applied to improve the well-being of captive populations of giraffe and okapi. © 2001 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Stereotyped behavior; Oral behavior; Housing; Welfare; Zoo animals

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