

Comparison of diets fed to South-East Asian Colobines in North American and European Zoos Versus Natural Diets

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In May and June 1994 a survey of diets fed to south-east Asian colobines in captivity in European (n = 12) and North American (n = 9) zoos was conducted. Most diets were very complex, comprising up to 149 ingredients. Comparison of diets fed showed that European zoos feed a greater variety of fruits and vegetables than North American zoos. No standardized diet recommendations, based on ingredient or nutrient composition are currently available for colobines in captivity. Natural foods eaten by these primates contain higher amounts of NDF (43.7- 66.7%), ADF (30.5-52.3%) and lignin (14.5-28.3%) than current zoo diets (NDF 12.5% ± 4.6; ADF 6.3% ± 2.8; Lig. 1.0% ± 1.1), Temperate browse (leaves plus twigs) (n = 11) sampled in the summer and autumn contained similar amounts of NDF (44.0-78.9%), ADF (34.3-61.0%) and lignin (8.8-20.2%), Fast growing roses grown in greenhouses, fed primarily in Europe, contain lower amounts of fiber (NDF 32.3%, ADF 17.7%, Lig. 3.9%), and may not be the best substitute for native foods. Based on these results, a product is under development containing a high level of indigestible fiber to supplement zoo diets; feeding trials are in progress in several facilities.

Key words: browse composition, diet survey, colobine nutrition