

TRAINING PROCESS FOR THE COLLECTION OF MILK SAMPLES IN CENTRAL AMERICAN TAPIR (*TAPIRUS BAIRDII*)

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Abstract

Animal training is a tool that is used for an animal to perform a command voluntarily in exchange for a reward, in addition to establishing a bond between the trainer and the animal. In zoological facilities, animal training is used to facilitate medical procedures or health monitoring on a voluntary basis. Zoo animals can be trained to voluntarily obtain blood and milk samples, applying vaccines or medications, ultrasounds, scrapings, etc. For this study, animal training was focused on obtaining milk samples from a Central American tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*) to subsequently determine the nutrient curve during the first two weeks of lactation. The training process for this study concentrated on conditioning a female *T. bairdii* to procedures necessary to extract milk samples. The steps taken included familiarization with the milker and desensitization of the body with particular focus on the udders. Training sessions were performed three times weekly, for an average of 20 minutes each, for three months. In total, two prepartum and 12 postpartum milk samples were extracted through massage. Tapir training was essential to achieve the desired behaviors to obtain milk samples that provide knowledge about the calf nutrition, this contributes to the conservation of this species by understanding the nutritional behavior in the beginning of lactation. The collection of milk samples from an endangered species provided relevant samples for the subsequent understanding of the nutrient curve during the first two weeks of lactation.