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RESUMO

Myrmecophaga tridactyla is a mammal of the order Pilosa, which occurs in all biomes of Brazil. This species is currently considered vulnerable by the IUCN, and its population is decreasing in the natural habitat, mainly due to fragmentation of the territory, burning and hunting. However, in addition to the causes, giant anteaters are also persecuted due to popular beliefs that claim that these animals are bad luck symbols. That said, the purpose of this paper is to report the case of a giant anteater victim of abuse. An adult specimen of *Myrmecophaga tridactyla*, with a body condition score 2 out of 5, female, lactating, with a baby on its back, was rescued by the Battalion of the Environmental Military Police (BPMA) and sent to the Veterinary Hospital of the University of Brasília (UnB). The animal was in a semicomatous state with extensive lesions on the head and chest members. Due to poor general conditions and an unfavorable prognosis, the animal was euthanized and sent to the Veterinary Pathology Laboratory (LPV-UnB) for necropsy. The cub was sent to parental care at the Brasília Zoo. The anteater had hyperemic oral and ocular mucosa, multiple sharp and cutting lesions surrounded by hemorrhagic and necrotic focus with exposure of the underlying musculature in the thoracic limbs, pre-scapular region and head. The proximal region of the right thoracic limb was on the verge of being hewed due to deep injuries. The necropsy showed an irregular incomplete fracture of the parietal bone surrounded by hemorrhagic areas with exposure of the underlying brain mass, and moderate multifocal hemorrhage in the parietal cortex and in the right piriform lobe. The diagnosis was polytrauma by a sharp object, probably caused by a knife. Popular beliefs and superstitions can be harmful to the conservation of species, as it causes animals to be killed and tortured, and can lead them to extinction. The giant anteater is one of the animals affected by this superstition in Brazilians, Colombians and Bolivians territories, and its disappearance is partly linked to this, in addition to the destruction of habitats. A survey carried out between 2013 and 2014 that used a roadkill dataset from Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, revealed that the anteater was the third most ran over animal, and researchers believe that most of the accidents would be intentional. The present report shows an anteater that was probably tied up, stabbed and kept in captivity until the moment of the complaint. The report described in the present work is just one example of the mistreatment that occurs daily in Brazil. To avoid such atrocities, environmental education, combined with knowledge of local beliefs and superstitions, must reach different social classes and all age groups. PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Myrmecophaga tridactyla*; Necropsy; Superstition

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