

ULTRASONOGRAPHY OF THE ABDOMEN AND ASSESSMENT OF GASTRIC WALL THICKENING IN PUPS OF GIANT-ANTEATER DURING FASTING AND POST-FEEDING

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RESUMO

Giant anteaters (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*) are found throughout Central and South Americas and are classified as vulnerable by the IUCN. Its main threats include crashes with vehicles, agriculture expansion, wildfires, habitat loss, and poaching. The TamanduASAS Project takes and keeps rescued orphan giant anteaters for their rehab and monitored release back into the wild. Two female giant anteater pups (ca. 3 months old) were rescued after their mothers had been killed in collisions and went through medical evaluations with monthly ultrasonography. Medical knowledge on *Xenarthra* is still under development, and there is yet a great demand for diagnostic imaging, so this study aimed to report findings concerning transabdominal ultrasonography and gastric wall thickening during fasting and after feeding. We used a Mindray DP-50 Vet ultrasound unit with a 3,5-9 MHz microconvex probe and conductive ultrasound gel. The patients were physically contained in dorsal decubitus position for examination performed by an ultrasonographer veterinarian. The abdominal ultrasonography revealed bladder at the median line in the hypogastrium and thin echogenic walls with anechoic material. Right and left kidneys were visualized in the hypogastrium adjacently to the bladder, with equivalent cortical/medullary thickness ratios (1:1), cortical-renal hypoechoic region relative to the spleen, definite internal architecture, and echogenic renal sinus without renal pelvis dilation. Spleen with a falciform shape located in the left epigastric region, adjacent to the stomach and reaching the left mesogastric region. Loops of small intestine with thin walls (ca. 0.22 cm) and mucous material, evolving peristalsis, stratified laminar architecture with preserved cell walls. Colon composed of thin (0.18cm-0.22cm) echogenic wall and presence of solid remains (faeces). Liver with a hypoechoic (relative to the spleen), homogeneous parenchyma and mean echotexture. Gallbladder with echogenic thin (0.14cm-0.20cm) walls, filled with anechoic material. Left and right uterine horns as tubular structures located dorsally to the bladder, with regular homogeneous walls, thickness around 0.51cm and absence of intrauterine material. Fasting patients presented thickened (0.69-0.99cm) hypoechoic walls and laminar architecture with indefinite layers. After feeding, the patients presented gastric distension with liquid and gas, gastric wall thickness of 0.34-0.23 cm, and laminar architecture with evident layers. Free anechoic liquid visualized in the abdominal cavity in at least two acoustic windows. We observed syntopy of the spleen, stomach, liver, bladder, and uterus when compared to canids. Kidneys were also more caudal than in dogs. Ovaries and adrenal glands could not be visualized. Additional studies on giant anteater pups are fundamental for comparing the ultrasound findings and determining the pattern in this species.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Giant-anteater, Diagnosis, Image, Wild animals

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