

Background and Aim

Preference and motivation tests are powerful techniques when it comes to assessing animal welfare. These types of tests can facilitate animals in captivity to express different priorities. The motivation can be assessed by having animals “pay an entry cost” (e.g. push a weighted door) that increases with time to get access to a resource. The highest price that the animals are willing to pay for this resource is called “the maximum price paid”.

In this study, the preference and motivation of bush dogs were assessed. The bush dog is a small and rather unknown neo-tropical canid.

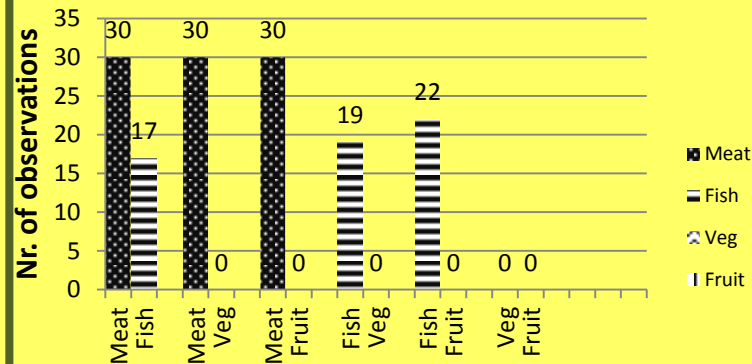


The aim of this study was to assess the maximum price paid for a preferred food type in a group of bush dogs kept at Kolmården Wildlife Park.

Results

The food preference test showed that the bush dogs preferred meat and fish. In fact, the vegetables and fruit were never chosen at all.

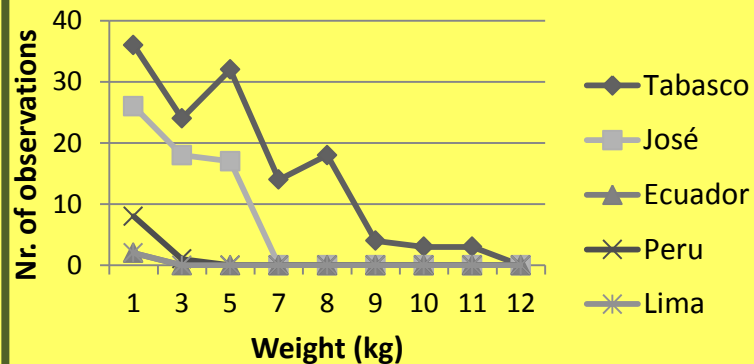
Choice of food item in preference test



The six different food combinations

The maximum price paid test showed that five individuals were willing to pay a price to get access to meat. The highest price was paid by Tabasco at 11 kg.

Maximum price paid test



Material and Methods

The study was carried out on a group of 15 bush dogs at Kolmården Wildlife Park. The group consisted of a parent pair and their offspring.

Food preference test

The first test was a simple choice test with two alternatives. Four different food items (meat, fish, vegetables and fruit) were presented to test which food item the bush dogs preferred i.e. consumed first.



Maximum price paid test

The second test was a lift-door experiment which measured how much the bush dogs were willing to pay (the maximum price paid) to get access to meat. The meat was placed inside the box and then the bush dogs entered the box by pushing a hinged diagonal gate loaded with weights inside the smaller box in the upper right corner.



Conclusions



Food preference

The bush dogs preferred meat and fish over vegetables and fruit.



Maximum price paid

The highest price that the bush dogs paid for meat was 11 kg.

Further studies assessing how much bush dogs value other resources are desirable.

Since bush dogs have webbed feet and are known to hunt down prey into water, it would be interesting to test how much they value swimming water.

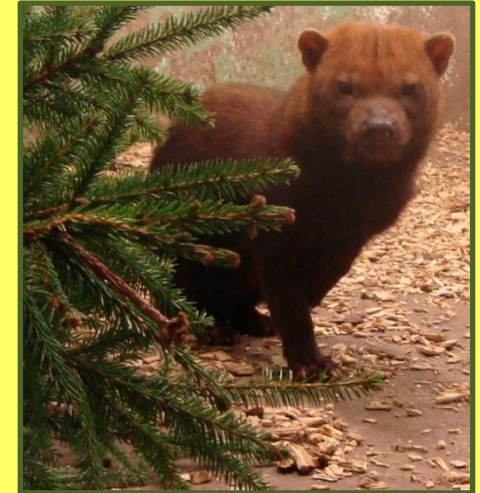
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Mats Amundin, the caretakers at Kolmården Wildlife Park and last but not least the bush dogs!



Contact information
Taina Thernström
+46736-894000
taith041@student.liu.se

Maximum price paid in captive Bush dogs (*Speothos venaticus*)



Taina Thernström

International Master's programme

Applied ethology and animal biology 2012

Supervisor: Mats Amundin
Linköping University