

HERPETOLOGIA

A column for short herpetological contributions

USE OF FROZEN CHICKS TO FEED *CORALLUS ENYDRIS ENYDRIS* WHO HADN'T FED FOR LONG

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Apart from my other snakes I keep two slender treeboas (*Corallus enydris enydris*). They feed well and consume about two mice every three weeks. However, this model behaviour stops in December when the mating-season starts. The first time this happened was in 1993/1994, but also this year (1994/1995) they stopped feeding.

At the end of March 1994 they still didn't feed. Microscopical examination of their faeces indicated the presence of flagelates. Treatment with Flagyl in a dose of 200 mg/kg was effective and the female started to feed soon. The male, in contrast, still refused mice till the end of April. On the advice of colleague snake-keepers I put him apart and actually in the beginning of May (after haven't fed for five months and being about 100 gram lighter) he strangled and ate his first mouse. However, this mouse was only caught after it was rubbed together with a wet defrozen chick. Right after this incident the male sloughed. After this slough he again refused every mouse. Although two alive chicks were strangled with entousiasm, they were not eaten, since the snake appeared not to be able to find their head. Apparently, the snake was hungry! Then I got a flash of intuition. I peeled the skin of a defrozen chick and spread it over the back of a mouse. By rubbing the skin in the hairs it was glued well. I put this mouse on a small board and kept it in front of the refusing *Corallus*. Practically immediately he caught the mouse, strangled it and.... grabbed it by the nose and ate it. When this happened a few times very well, he also started to feed on mice without the chick-trick.

This year as well the female started to feed by itself at the end of March. Mid-April I fed the male, after offering a few times a normal mouse, again a mouse with chick-skin. Also this time the mouse was grapped from the board after 10 seconds watching and inspecting.

I don't know whether this will also work with other snake species, however, also my vipers are keen on chick-legs (of day-old chicks) and often only feed on these during difficult times (e.g. after a treatment against flagelates).