MORPHOLOGICAL AND ANATOMICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NUTRIA (MYOCASTOR COYPUS) IN A SLOVAKIAN POPULATION

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Nutria (Myocastor coypus) has been present in Europe since the 19th century. Despite this fact, wildlife management and nature conservation do not obtain enough knowledge about this invasive, non-native species. The main purpose of this study was to collect more information about this rodent, and to answer on those questions: 1) What body sizes do nutria females and males have compared to each other, are they in good condition for a successful reproduction?; 2) Can the reproduction of nutria be confirmed based on the examination of the reproductive organs, and what we can reveal about their reproductive strategy? We collected animals by hunting rifles and trapping in different periods of a year. The carcasses were analysed in the laboratory, measuring the body weight, body, head, tail and hindfoot lengths, and observing the reproductive and digestive organs. We found that most of the animals were in good general condition. The different body sizes showed higher absolute values for males than for females. The body weight for males could reach 10,1 kg. We confirm that the nutria is highly reproductive. We found signs of reproduction in 62% of females from May to October, and even during October we could find 10 embryos for a specimen (the most was 11 embryos). Since the nutria is a non-native, invasive species, which is harmful in several ways to the ecosystem, moreover, highly reproductive, there is a need to eradicate them and stop their range expansion. Within the framework of our ongoing we plan to collect additional data on the species from Hungary.