

Husbandry of the axolotl (*Ambystoma maculatum*): successful treatment of a case of constipation

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Between 5th and 8th January 2015 we recorded the birth of 81 axolotl (*Ambystoma maculatum*) larvae at the Science Museum of Camerino University. They were maintained at 17°C and fed on brine shrimps. A number of these animals were subsequently dispersed to other collections, and in September 2015 one of these, now 8 cm in total length, was returned to the Museum with foreign body constipation symptoms. At first glance, the subject showed an abnormal lower limbs posture, not relaxed in a normal orthogonal position to the body but with parallel poise. There was also swelling in the region of the cloaca. The patient was then transferred to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital of Camerino University for a body X-ray examination (Fig. 1, taken on 7th October 2015) which showed the presence of many round-to-oval, smooth, radiopaque foreign bodies at the level of the stomach and intestine, with some of these little stones enlarging and blocking the cloaca. Olive oil was then administered orally with a catheter normally used for human babies and a few stones in the cloaca were extracted with tweezers. After one day, an olive oil enema, performed with the same catheter, resulted in a reduction in the number of these foreign bodies. After a further week, another radiograph was taken, showing the reduction in number of the foreign bodies (Fig. 2). The animal eventually made a complete recovery. We are unaware of any literature relating to problems of this kind and hope that this experience might be of use to others who might be faced with problems due to constipation in small amphibians.

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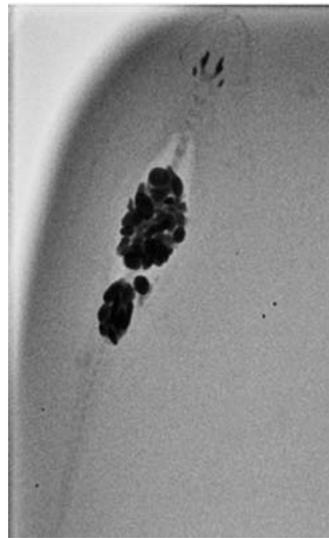


Figure 1. First radiograph of the young axolotl showing almost total occlusion of the stomach and a severe intestinal constipation.

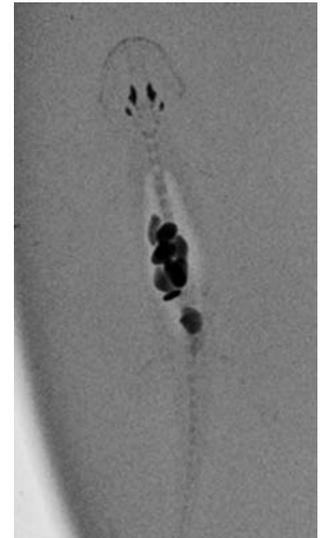


Figure 2. Radiograph taken after the first treatment. The clinical picture of the subject is much improved, with about 75% of the grit ejected.

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