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Density and behavior potentially indicative of stress in captive capuchin monkeys

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Captivity is an environment where animals are subjected to various stressful events such as forced proximity between conspecifics, greater proximity to humans, less opportunity to display natural behaviors, as well as disturbed macro and microclimates. This setting elicits the exhibition of Behaviors Potentially Indicative of Stress (BPIS), which are frequently observed in captivity but rarely registered in wild. Recent studies suggest that wide-ranging species living in large groups and larger home-range size tend to exhibit more BPIS in captivity, such as "hair pulling" and "pacing", than less sociable and smaller ranging species. In wild, capuchin monkeys live in groups of 15 to 45 animals (*Sapajus spp*) occupying home ranges of, on average, 344 hectares. In this work, we tested the hypothesis that density and stress related behavior will be positively correlated. We registered the behaviors of 124 adult capuchin monkeys kept in 17 groups in rescue centers and zoos, housed in areas with dimensions ranging from 4m³ and 240m³. BPIS accounted for 18% of the time budget, on average. Analyses performed using General Linear Model (GLM) confirmed that increased density increases the display BPIS ($r_s = 0.16$, $p = 0.071$). Furthermore, the social network index of dominance correlated negatively to the frequency of BPIS, indicating that subordinate individuals face more stress under higher densities ($r_s = -0.24$, $p = 0.023$). The expansion of enclosures, distribution of food in more than one location inside enclosure and management to maintain stable groups may relieve the intra-group conflicts and alleviate stressful situations, improving the quality of life of captive animals. Financial Support: CNPq.

Key words: density, stereotypies, welfare