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An Observational Study of the Sexual Behavior of Somali Wild Asses

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AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY OF THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF SOMALI WILD ASSES

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An observational study focusing on the sexual behavior of Somali Wild Asses, Equus africanus somaliensis, was conducted at the Saint Louis Zoo. The incentive for this study was the fact that there is little literature on the sexual behavior of these critically endangered wild asses. The objective was to focus on how sexual behaviors correlate with reproductive hormones. As is shown in behavioral studies of domesticated horses, hormones such as progesterone and LH influence the receptivity and subsequent sexual behaviors of female equids, as well as the males. To provide a baseline for this study, the asses were observed routinely throughout the week and hormone levels were monitored daily by fecal samples. It was concluded that those sexual behaviors which infer receptiveness towards mating correlated with peaks of progesterone levels of the female asses. In the future, conclusions made in this study can be used as a means of comparison to the sexual behaviors exhibited by other wild equids, such as the Grevy's Zebra, Equus grevyi, which ultimately could be useful in the preservation of both these endangered species.