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## BREEDING *VIPERA MAURITANICA MAURITANICA*.

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### INTRODUCTION

*Vipera mauritanica mauritanica* lives in the northern areas of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. The subspecies *Vipera mauritanica deserti* lives in Algeria and Tunisia, south of the Atlas mountain-range. In Libya the area of distribution ranges up to the coast (Brodman, 1987).

It is a sturdy snake, with a total length of about 1.50 m. The yellowish venom acts mainly on the blood and its circulation causing enormous bleedings (Trutnau). According to recent publications, this species is now called *Daboia mauritanica*.

### TERRARIUM

My animals are housed in a wooden terrarium of 150x65x65 cm. The slanting front windows are closed by firm slide locks. Light is provided by two 18 watt fluorescent strip lights, heating by two 40 watt reflector lights. Under the heating lights, there is a sun terrace, which is a favourite place for the snakes. On this spot the temperature can rise to 40°C.

The floor is covered with river sand and some larger stones which are used for sheltering.

The male is 1.65 m and weighs about 3.5 kg. The female is smaller, about 1.25 m. Both

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animals behave tranquil in the terrarium, except when they are hungry: then they may fall out when one approaches the terrarium. As for feeding, they are really easy. I give them dead and live prey: guinea-pigs, rats, mice, gerbils, hamsters, birds and sometimes ephemeron chickens. Rabbits are bitten, but not eaten.

When *Vipera mauritanica* is startled it hisses loudly, and it may happen that some venom is spat. However, this is never aimed at the disturber. I have seen the female spit a few times against the front windows.

#### BREEDING

From October 1988 until the beginning of March 1989 both animals were housed in an unheated terrarium. After this period the terrarium was heated again. On 11 April the male sloughed for the first time, but still did not eat until after mating.

The female started to eat on 30 March and was separated from the male because it was not yet ready to mate. On 9 May I placed it in the same terrarium as the male and the next day I observed them mating.

A few days later the female was again put into another terrarium. A few times I injected the prey with vitamin AD-3 and during the pregnancy the female ate one cavia, ten mice and one hamster. On 12 and 13 July 40 eggs were laid in a (especially for this purpose) prepared sack filled with moistened soil. This soil was not sterilized. A few days after laying the eggs the female ate some mice.

The eggs were put in a Jager breeding-machine in moist soil and incubated at temperatures between 25 and 29°C. On 31 August

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some young snakes hatched. These first youngsters were the strongest of the clutch. In total forty young snakes hatched. Only one, the last, was so weak that it had to be killed. The snakes weighed 14 g on an average at a length of 20 cm. It is striking that only two snakes had strong contrasting markings, the others had a more or less rusty colour. The sexes were about equal in number, as far as sex could be determined.

### CONCLUSION

*Vipera mauritanica mauritanica* is not difficult to keep. Provided that it is not disturbed too much, it will not be aggressive or easily irritated. Its length and strength however should always be remembered.

If both sexes are separated after hibernation until the end of April or the beginning of May, it is possible to breed this snake. Because of the length and strength of this snake it is advisable to separate them as soon as possible as the female is not prepared to mate anymore, otherwise the male could injure the female trying to induce it to mate. The terrarium should always be provided with some solid shelter places.

The serum which should be used in cases of accidents with *Vipera mauritanica* and *Vipera lebetina transmediterranae* is 'Nordafrika', produced by Behringwerk. For other species of the *Lebetina*-group one should



Foto 1: *Vipera mauretanica mauretanica*, male. Foto I. de Vries.

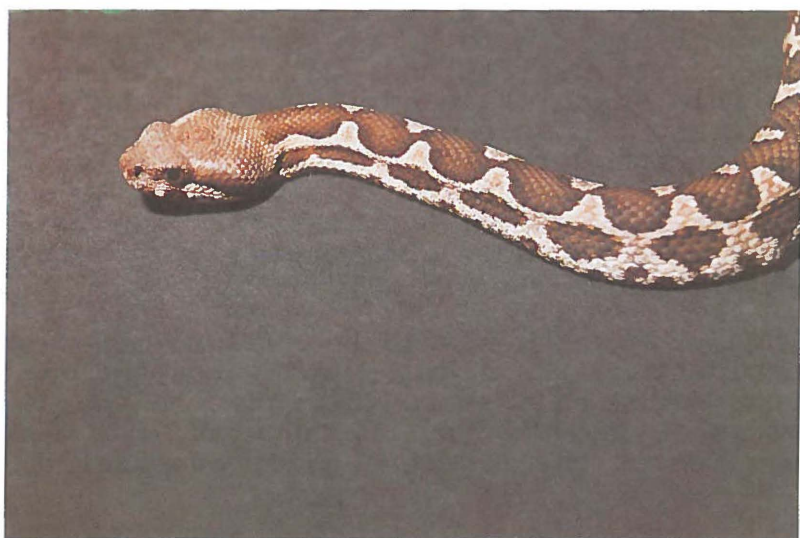


Foto 2: *Vipera mauretanica mauretanica*, juvenile. Foto A. Weima.

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use 'Vorderer und Mittlerer Orient', also produced by Behringwerk.

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