

LAMPROPELTIS MEXICANA MEXICANA IN THE TERRARIUM II

By: Hans van der Eerden, Kempkeshoeve 43, 5262 NZ Vught, The Netherlands.

Contents: Introduction - Winterrest and matings - Rivalry between the males - The pregnancy of female A - The pregnancy of female B - Cause of the problems with female A - References.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to my article of last year (van der Eerden, 1990), it now deals with four snakes, namely:

- female A (captive bred in 1988 from the U.S.A.)
- female B (probably captive bred from Germany)
- male A (captive bred 1988, U.S.A.)
- male B (captive bred from Germany)

WINTERREST AND MATINGS

The snakes went through a winter rest of almost three months at temperatures between 14 and 18°C. The animals had always water at their disposal.

After the winter rest light and heating were brought directly from 0 hour to 15 hours. In the period from 7 February 1991 till 16 April 1991 the animals were together regularly and in all possible combinations (four in all). All this resulted in the (observed) matings as given in Table 1.

Date	Combination	Time
220291	♂ A x ♀ A	late evening
230291	♂ B x ♀ A	morning
100491	♂ A x ♀ B	late evening
110491	♂ B x ♀ B	evening
130491	♂ A x ♀ B	evening
140491	♂ A x ♀ B	morning



Foto 1: *Lampropeltis mexicana mexicana*, man, male.
Foto H.v.d. Eerden.

RIVALRY BETWEEN THE MALES

A male's urge to mate was greatest when a second male was introduced in the terrarium. Whenever that was the case a competitive struggle developed, in which both males pursued each other, trying to push each other away and sometimes it even seemed as if they tried to mate with each other, by which their tails were tangled around one another. In this case they didn't take notice of the females present. Even when there were no females present in the terrarium the males showed this behaviour. If there were any, and one of the males was removed, a mating often followed.

THE PREGNANCY OF FEMALE A

Female A accepted food for the last time on 6 April 1991, a hairy nestmouse and a slightly older one. She sloughed on 21 April. From that time onwards she was very restless. She kept on crawling in and out of her laying tray and investigated the whole terrarium.

In the early morning of 29 April the first egg was laid. In the course of that day another two were layed. The next day two bad eggs were laid, and the shell of a crushed egg was half protruding from the cloaca. Part of an ovary was also hanging about 10 cm out of the cloaca. Right then there were still two eggs inside her body. After waiting for about twelve hours I decided to massage these eggs out. Another egg burst during this treatment.

The female carried a total of eight eggs, of which only the first three were good. The piece of ovary that still hung out of the cloaca was disinfected and cut off. On 1 May 1991 she still had some clotty, bloody secretion, but she ate her first small mouse. She stood all this well,



Foto 2: *Lampropeltis mexicana mexicana*, in copula.
Foto H.v.d. Eerden.



Foto 3: *Lampropeltis mexicana mexicana*, vrouw, female.
Foto H.v.d. Eerden.

and eats readily mice up till now (1 October 1991). This female will not be used anymore for breeding attempts.

On 1 July one egg hatched, and on 2 July the other two eggs followed. The juveniles were one male and two females. They were beautiful, strong juveniles which ate nestmice almost immediately after their first slough.

THE PREGNANCY OF FEMALE B

Female B accepted food for the last time on 12 April 1991, being a hairy nestmouse and a small mouse. She shed her skin on 6 May 1991. From 9 May nest-searching began and on 13 May she lay eight eggs. These were (just like those of female A) incubated in moist wood shavings at temperatures ranging between 24-30°C. In the course of the incubation period six of the eight eggs went bad. A possible cause might be that the eggs at the bottom of the incubator were too wet.

On June 22 I opened one bad egg. It contained an embryo of about 4 cm that showed already faint markings. The rest of this egg was cheesy. Of the remaining two eggs one hatched on 5 July, the last one on 8 July. The young were both males. The first one was very small, but compared to the rest was built just as strong. Both these young have also started to eat well.

CAUSE OF THE PROBLEMS WITH FEMALE A

Last year everything pointed to being pregnant of this animal, but no eggs were laid. Probably, eggs were developed but these were absorbed back. After this absorption of the eggs, scars were probably left in the ovary. Because she had still some large eggs this year, it is very well possible that the ovary burst right at such a scar.

REFERENCES

- Eerden, Hans van der, 1991. *Lampropeltis mexicana mexicana* in het terrarium. *Litteratura Serpantium* 11 (1).
- Markel, Ronald G., 1990. *Kingsnakes and Milksnakes*. T.F.M. Publications, Inc., Ltd. Neptune City, New Jersey, U.S.A.
- Osborne, Steven T., 1985. De kweek van Colubriden in gevangenschap. *Litteratura Serpantium* 5 (2).