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Longitudinal growth monitoring and systematic deworming in a captive leopard (*Panthera pardus*) cub: A six-month case study

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Abstract

The early growth stage of wild felid cubs is a critical period that significantly impacts survival, health, and long-term fitness. Gastrointestinal parasitism is a common issue in captive neonates, often leading to poor nutrient absorption, slow growth, and an increased risk of secondary infections. This report details the longitudinal growth monitoring of a captive-born leopard (*Panthera pardus*) cub from birth to six months within a structured veterinary care program.

At birth, the cub weighed 0.52 kg. A systematic deworming protocol was followed using Sky Worm, Albendazole, and Felid D, along with supportive therapy (Gutwell and Proviboost). Regular monitoring revealed progressive weight gain, with the cub reaching 13.4 kg at 176 days (approximately 6 months of age). The cub displayed improved appetite, activity, and coat condition, with no signs of parasitic morbidity.

This case emphasises the importance of implementing scheduled deworming and nutritional supplementation in captive carnivore neonates to promote optimal growth and health, thereby supporting ex situ conservation and rehabilitation efforts.

Keywords: Leopard cub, growth monitoring, deworming, albendazole, sky worm, felid D, probiotics, captive felid management, wildlife medicine

Introduction

Leopards (*Panthera pardus*) are among the most adaptable big cats, distributed widely across Asia and Africa. In captivity, the health and survival of neonates are heavily dependent on appropriate husbandry, nutritional support, and veterinary care. Neonatal mortality in wild felids is often attributed to gastrointestinal parasitism, bacterial infections, malnutrition, or inadequate maternal care.

Parasites compete with the host for nutrients and can impair intestinal absorption, leading to growth retardation and increased morbidity. Regular deworming protocols have been shown to improve growth performance in both domestic and wild felids. However, published records detailing structured neonatal deworming protocols in captive leopards are scarce.

This report describes a 6-month longitudinal record of a captive leopard cub from birth to juvenile age, with special emphasis on growth responses following routine deworming and supplementation.

Case Description

A leopard cub (*Panthera pardus*) was born on 24 January 2025 in captivity under veterinary supervision.

Initial Condition

- **Birth weight:** 0.52 kg
- **Clinical findings:** The cub appeared active, alert, and responsive, with a normal suckling reflex and no congenital abnormalities.



Intervention Protocols

Veterinary care included:

- Deworming:** Initiated at 15 days of age using Sky Worm. Subsequent doses included Albendazole and Felid D at 15- and 1-month intervals, up to 3 months and 6 months of age, respectively.
- Nutritional Supplementation:** Probiotics (Gutwell) and Proviboost were introduced at 25 days of age to improve gut health and overall growth.
- Monitoring:** Body weight was recorded at every deworming interval. Appetite, activity, stool consistency, and coat condition were regularly evaluated.

Drug Composition

- Sky Worm:** Praziquantel 50 mg, Pyrantel Embonate 144 mg, Febantel 150 mg
- Felid D:** Praziquantel 20 mg, Pyrantel Embonate 230 mg

- Gutwell:** Probiotics: (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *S. boulardii*, and a *Lactobacillus* complex (*L. acidophilus*, *L. casei*, *L. rhamnosus*) 800 million CFU; Prebiotics: (Fructo-Oligo-Saccharides) 20 mg; Enzyme complex: protease, lipase, amylase, beta-glucanase, cellulase, hemicellulose, and pectinase.
- Proviboost:** Arginine: 2mg, Vitamin D3: 200 IU, Histidine: 0.1mg, Vitamin E: 6 mg, Isoleucine: 07mg, Vitamin B1: 0.3 mg, Leucine: 2 mg, Vitamin B2: 0.5 mg, Lysine: 44 mg, Vitamin B3: 10 mg, Methionine: 14 mg, Vitamin B5: 2 mg, Phenylalanine: 0.5 mg, VitaminB6: 1 mg, Threonine: 0.5mg, Vitamin C: 30 mg, Tryptophan: 0.5mg, Choline: 5 mg, Valine: 0.8mg, Biotin (Vit. H): 0.2 mcg, Vitamin A: 450 IU, DHA: 0.1 mg

Treatment Timeline and Growth Monitoring

Date	Age (days)	Weight (kg)	Drug	Notes
24-01-2025	0	0.52	-	Birth weight
08-02-2025	15	0.7	Sky Worm	First deworming
23-02-2025	30	0.9	Sky Worm	Started Gutwell + Proviboost
10-03-2025	45	1.2	Albendazole	Deworming
25-03-2025	60	1.5	Albendazole	Deworming
09-04-2025	75	3.5	Sky Worm	Deworming
24-04-2025	90	5.5	Sky Worm	Deworming
24-05-2025	120	7.8	Felid D	Deworming
24-06-2025	150	10.2	Felid D	Deworming
24-07-2025	180	13.4	Felid D	Deworming

Results

- Weight gain:** From 0.52 kg at birth to 13.4 kg at 6 months.
- Health status:** The cub remained clinically healthy with improved body condition, normal stool consistency, and a shiny coat.
- Growth curve:** A steady increase in body weight was observed (see Figure 1).
- Behavioural improvement:** Increased playfulness, alertness, and activity were noted over time.

Discussion

Parasitic infections are a significant challenge in captive carnivore cubs, with nematodes such as *Toxocara*, *Ancylostoma*, and *Trichuris* commonly reported in leopards

and other big cats. These parasites can cause stunted growth, anaemia, diarrhoea, and even mortality in neonates.

In this case, early deworming start ensured the prevention of heavy parasitic burdens. The alternating use of Albendazole and broad-spectrum formulations like Sky Worm and Felid D provided effective control against gastrointestinal helminths. Nutritional supplementation further enhanced growth by:

- Gutwell (probiotics):** Supporting healthy gut microflora, improving digestion, and boosting immunity.
- Proviboost:** Providing essential vitamins and amino acids for metabolic growth and tissue repair.

The observed growth trajectory aligns with previously reported values in captive leopard cubs, where healthy juveniles reach approximately 12-14 kg by 6 months

(Dehnhard *et al.*, 2006) [3]. The absence of parasitic morbidity and consistent weight gain emphasize the effectiveness of the protocol.

This case also emphasizes the importance of preventive veterinary care in wildlife conservation. Cubs raised in captivity are often suited for rehabilitation or breeding programs; therefore, ensuring optimal neonatal health offers long-term conservation benefits.

Conclusion

A structured deworming and supplementation program significantly enhanced growth and health outcomes in a captive leopard cub during its first six months. Early interventions, nutritional support, and consistent monitoring should be viewed as essential parts of neonatal management in captive wild felids. Such protocols not only promote the survival and well-being of cubs but also support the success of broader ex-situ conservation efforts.

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