

# Rock ingestion in Orinoco crocodile hatchlings under human care

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***Abstract:*** Twenty-five two-month-old Orinoco crocodiles divided in four groups were put on display at the DWA on 5/17/2007. The aqua-terrarium was 2m<sup>2</sup> with two UV lights, a small pond, some plants, and pebbles as substrate. The crocodiles were on display from 10 am to 5 pm and overnighted in the crocodile nursery. Each group was displayed for one day and spent the next three days in the nursery in acrylic tanks without substrate. All groups were fed twice a day with ½ crickets dusted with calcium and minerals. After the first day on display, some pebbles were found in the bottom of the Group 1 tank in the nursery, and subsequently the same happened with the other three groups. The very first day the crocodiles were on display, they swallowed pebbles. A normal behavior in crocodiles, we did not pay much attention to that fact until a week later when many crickets were found alive in the tanks, meaning the crocodiles were not eating them as usual. All the pebbles from the exhibit were removed on 6/1/2007 and play sand was added as substrate. Some crocodiles threw up rocks the following days after swallowing. On 07/13/2007, one crocodile regurgitated nine pebbles (six weeks after the exhibit pebbles were removed). The average diameter and weight of the pebbles were 13.4 x 17 mm and 2.8 grams. 100 pebbles were recovered from the crocodile nursery tank. On 7/29/2007, crocodile #4 was taken to the clinic with signs of cachexia. Fluids were given subcutaneously and orally, as well as food. X-rays were taken on 7/31/2007 showing a stomach with 10 pebbles. The crocodile was hydrated orally and subcutaneously the following days; on 8/3/2007, the pebbles, representing 20% of the body weight, were removed manually with small forceps. The crocodile recovered satisfactorily.

***Keywords:*** Gastroliths, *Crocodylus intermedius*, Hatchlings, Captivity

***Type of Presentation:*** Oral

***Thematic Area:*** *Ex situ* Conservation (P5: Veterinary)