

# LONG-TERM ADMINISTRATION OF HALOPERIDOL IN AN AFRICAN ELEPHANT (*Loxodonta africana*), SUPPORTING THE THERAPY OF SELF-DESTRUCTIVE STEREOTYPIC BEHAVIOR

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## **Abstract**

Haloperidol has been used for behavior modification in several species.<sup>2,3,5</sup> In the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), single administration dosages are described,<sup>1,4</sup> but an extended oral regimen has not been published. A 29-year female African elephant, kept for 23 years alone, showed stereotypic behavior, following a translocation into a newly established group of conspecifics. The lack of socialization, abnormal eruption of the tusks, inflammation of the tusk sheaths, and anxiety appeared in the medical history of the animal. The behavioral anomalies worsened in over the next two years in the winter period, when the confinement in the closed barn increased. Knocking of the head, chip fractures of the tusk, traumatic lesions and persistent inflammation of the facial area culminated. In the second year a complex treatment begun, including pain management, several episodes of wound debridement in standing sedation, X-ray assisted shaping of the tusks, modification of the handling techniques, behavioral enrichment, and the oral administration of 120 mg haloperidol (Haloperidol-Richter 1.5 mg Tablet, Richter Gedeon Nyrt., Budapest, 1103 Hungary) daily for 20 weeks. The prescribed dosage produced anxiolysis without profound sedation and adverse effects. The self-destructive behavior stopped, the elephant became more receptive for the stimuli of the environment and the conspecifics, developing appropriate responses. Further deterioration of the tusks and possible exposure of the pulp cavity was avoided and complete recovery of the soft tissues could be achieved. The neuroleptic therapy efficiently supported the complex management of this behavior problem.

**Key words:** African elephant, haloperidol, *Loxodonta africana*, neuroleptic therapy, stereotype behavior, tusk

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