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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Reproductive biology of the horned viper, *Cerastes cerastes gasperettii* in the central region of Saudi Arabia



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Abstract The reproductive biology of the horned viper, *Cerastes cerastes gasperettii*, in Riyadh region of Saudi Arabia was investigated over a period of one year. Study of reproductive cycle of male and female *C. c. gasperettii* revealed that the breeding season is relatively short (April and May). Thereafter females laid eggs by mid of July and hatching probably had taken place by the end of September. No activity was observed during winter, this may indicate just a single clutch per year. Relative testis weight to body weight was drastically increased ($\bar{X} = 0.88\%$) during the peak of reproductive activity (May) where maximal expansion of seminiferous tubules was also attained during April and May ($\bar{X} = 209 \mu\text{m}$ and $191 \mu\text{m}$, respectively). Likewise, the ovarian activity was the highest during May where ovarian parameters were greater in terms of relative ovarian weight to body weight and ova diameter being 0.46% and 2.29 mm , respectively. Fat body weight was increased drastically just before the peak of reproductive activity then started to decline during June. It could be concluded that the harsh desert conditions and similar environments certainly affect reproductive activity of Saudi Arabian reptiles including snakes.

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