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The relationship between ecological segregation and sexual body size dimorphism in large herbivores

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Abstract Ecological segregation (sexual differences in diet or habitat use) in large herbivores has been intimately linked to sexual body size dimorphism, and may affect both performance and survival of the sexes. However, no one has tested comparatively whether segregation occurs at a higher frequency among more dimorphic species. To test this comparatively, data on sex-specific diet, habitat use and body size of 40 species of large herbivores were extracted from the literature. The frequency of ecological segregation was higher among more dimorphic herbivores; however, this was only significant for browsers. This provides the first evidence that segregation is more common among more dimorphic species. The comparative evidence supported the nutritional-needs hypothesis over the incisor breadth hypothesis, as there was no difference in frequency of segregation between seasons with high and low resource levels, and since segregation was also evident among browsers. Whether the absence of a correlation between ecological segregation and level of sexual body size dimorphism for intermediate feeders and grazers is due to biological differences relative to browsers or to the fact that the monomorphic species included in the analysis were all browsers is discussed.

Key words Body size · Ecological segregation · Ruminants · Sexual body size dimorphism · Sexual segregation

Introduction

The mechanisms behind sexual segregation among large herbivores have been extensively debated in the last decade (Main and Coblenz 1990; Miquelle et al. 1992; Bon and Campan 1996; Main et al. 1996; Bleich et al. 1997;

Gross 1998; Main 1998). A recent advance has been to separate sexual segregation into social segregation (grouping with their own sex), spatial segregation (sexual differences in space use), diet segregation (sexual differences in diet use) and habitat segregation (sexual differences in habitat use) (Conradt 1998a). Conradt (1998b, 1999) and Ruckstuhl (1998) have convincingly demonstrated that size-related differences in foraging behaviour between males and females (see also Grubb and Jewell 1974; Pellew 1984; Seip and Bunnell 1985; Holmes 1988; Komers et al. 1993; Frid 1994; Ginnett and Demment 1997; Pérez-Barbería et al. 1997; but see Melton et al. 1990; Roberts and Dunbar 1991; Oakes et al. 1992) may lead to social segregation. However, ecological segregation (diet and habitat segregation combined) occur independently of social segregation (Conradt 1998b), and is especially important since it may affect both performance and survival of the sexes (Clutton-Brock et al. 1982; Owen-Smith 1993; Forsyth 1999).

Body size is regarded as a major factor in the nutritional ecology of large herbivores (Bell 1971; Jarman 1974; Demment and Van Soest 1985). Since the relative energy requirements decrease with increasing body size ($\text{weight}^{0.75}$), while rumen volume is isometric with size, large herbivores can survive on a lower-quality diet than smaller ones (the Jarman-Bell principle; Bell 1971; Geist 1974; Jarman 1974). Two proposed mechanisms for ecological segregation among herbivores incorporate this principle; the nutritional-needs hypothesis (NNH; Demment and Van Soest 1985) and the incisor breadth hypothesis (IBH; Clutton-Brock and Harvey 1983; Clutton-Brock et al. 1987; Illius and Gordon 1987; Gordon and Illius 1988). The NNH predicts that males should accept lower diet and habitat quality than females only when they are larger, since high-quality items are rare (i.e. there is a negative relationship between abundance and quality) and larger herbivores can subsist on a lower-quality diet than smaller herbivores (Demment and Van Soest 1985).

The basis of the IBH is that intake is partially limited by the incisor arcade breadth (which scales to $\text{weight}^{0.33}$) in periods of limited food supply, i.e. when grass swards

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are grazed to short levels, whereas intake is about isometric (weight^{0.9}) to body size in periods with no food restriction, i.e. when grass swards are tall (Clutton-Brock and Harvey 1983; Illius and Gordon 1987; Gordon and Illius 1988). Whenever the scaling coefficient of intake is lower than requirements (weight^{0.75}), small herbivores have a competitive advantage since each bite will represent a larger fraction of the daily metabolic requirements. The IBH therefore predicts that in periods of low resource levels, females outcompete males from mutually preferred swards only when males are larger. The IBH thus predicts, in contrast to the NNH, sexual segregation only in periods of limited food supply (winter in temperate areas/dry season in tropical areas), and this mechanism may only be applicable to grazing herbivores (Gordon and Illius 1988; du Toit 1995).

Apart from body size dimorphism, there is also much evidence supporting the reproductive-strategy hypothesis (RSH) as an important mechanism of ecological segregation (Main and Coblenz 1990; Miquelle et al. 1992; Main et al. 1996; Bleich et al. 1997), while social factors (Bon and Campan 1996) are more important for social segregation (Clutton-Brock et al. 1987). The RSH states that males should seek high-quality forage in order to improve body condition and growth, since fighting ability, which is correlated with body size, greatly influences their reproductive success. Females should select habitats that maximize their ability to raise young since this limits their reproductive success. Among ungulates, there are often extremely high (and highly variable) levels of mortality among newborn and young (Linnell et al. 1995; Gaillard et al. 1998). Since females take care of young, they should find areas with few predators, even at the expense of forage quality. The RSH predicts no comparative pattern of ecological segregation with regard to sexual body size dimorphism.

Even though sexual body size dimorphism is an integral part of the theory of sexual segregation (above), no one has presented comparative evidence that sexual segregation is more common in more dimorphic species. This is best tested using ecological segregation, since (1) social segregation can only be observed among gregarious herbivores (Conradt 1998b), and group size is closely correlated with levels of sexual body size dimorphism (Weckerly 1998; Loison et al. 1999) and (2) spatial segregation is very dependent on the spatiotemporal scale of observation (Bowyer et al. 1996). Here, I analyse whether ecological segregation is more common among more dimorphic species by comparing data on sex-specific diet and habitat use from 40 species of large herbivores with different feeding styles from both seasons when resource levels are high (summer/wet season) and low (winter/dry season).

Materials and methods

Data on diet and habitat use by both sexes of 40 temperate and tropical large herbivores were retrieved from the literature by searching in Zoological Records (volume 115–133) in WebSPIRS including the words “diet” or “habitat” and by looking in the refer-

ence lists of these papers (Appendix 1). Only studies published in English were included. Data were organized into four seasons (January–March, April–May, June–August, September–December), but if there was overlap with two categories, the study was included in only one category if the overlap was less than a month. Studies where data did not come from a specific season (Langlands 1969; Sinclair 1977; Hart 1992; Clemente et al. 1995) were excluded. For territorial species, only comparisons between territorial males and adult females were included, while non-territorial individuals were excluded. A broad definition of habitat was used (e.g. Wiens et al. 1993), including forage quantity, quality, risk/security factors (e.g. cover and number of predators), altitude and availability of water and minerals (salt). Data on feeding type were extracted from Hofmann (1989) and Loison et al. (1999), while data on body weights were extracted from various sources (Appendix 1).

Statistical analysis

Since information regarding ecological segregation was extracted from a variety of sources using very different indices of segregation, only the presence or absence of segregation was recorded. For each species, the number of habitat/food indices showing segregation (S_i , $i=1, 2, \dots, N$) and the total number of indices (n) were counted (Appendix 1). Under the assumption of independence of S_i , the number of indices showing segregation can be assumed to have a binomial distribution $\text{Bin}(S_i, p_{(S_i)})$, where $p_{(S_i)}$ is the probability of species i being segregated (which can be estimated as $\hat{p}=S_i/n$ and $n=n_{(S_i)}+n_{(1-S_i)}$); subsequently, logistic regression was used (Hosmer and Lemeshow 1989). Any violation of the assumption of independence will lead to unaccounted heterogeneity (overdispersion). This is usually assessed by statistical significance of the residual deviance (i.e. the goodness-of-fit statistic) of the fitted model. However, due to low sample size for many species, I used a quasi-likelihood test that need not correspond to any particular distribution, and which can be used to combine any available link and variance function (Venables and Ripley 1994). The level of sexual body size dimorphism was calculated as the proportional size difference between the heaviest (H) and lightest sex (L) $\{\log[(H-L)/L]\}$. I included season as a factor (high/low) in the model, based on assumed resource levels. For temperate-region herbivores, low and high resource levels were regarded as winter and summer, respectively. For tropical-region herbivores, low and high resource levels were regarded as summer (dry season) and winter (wet season), respectively. Although timing of the seasons, especially the wet season, may vary regionally in tropical regions and introduce more variation, this should not produce any bias. Climatic region (tropical/temperate) and feeding type (browser/intermediate feeder/grazer/non-ruminant) were included into the model since the IBH may only apply to grazers. Unfortunately, although the literature on the statistical treatment of phylogenetic data is considerable (Harvey and Pagel 1991; Martins and Hansen 1996), no method is available to treat data used in logistic regression (Martins and Hansen 1996). To at least partly account for phylogeny, I used as a factor in the analysis whether the herbivore was a cervid, bovid or came from another phylogenetic family (data from Loison et al. 1999). Mountain bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis canadensis*) and desert bighorn sheep (*O. c. mexicana* and *O. c. nelsoni*) were treated as different species due to large differences in body size and in sexual body size dimorphism. The omnivorous wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) was included since it is predominantly a herbivore (Jedrzejewska and Jedrzejewski 1998).

Results

The frequency of ecological segregation among large herbivores increased with increasing levels of sexual body size dimorphism (logistic regression, $n=69$, $df=1$, $\chi^2=101.120$, $P=0.024$). The frequency of ecological seg-

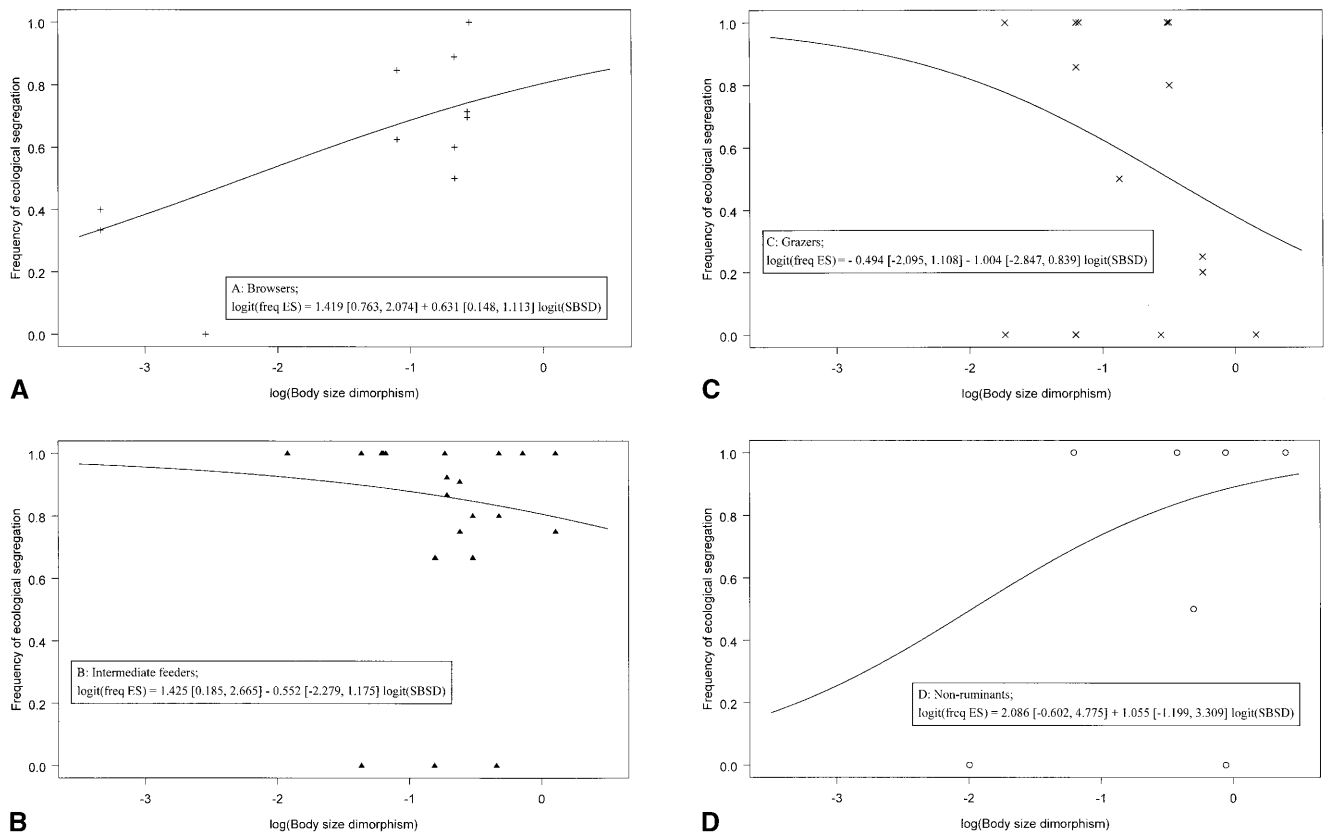


Fig. 1 The relationship between frequency of ecological segregation (*freq ES*) and sexual body size dimorphism (*SBSD*; log transformed) among large herbivores of different feeding types; browsers (A), intermediate feeders (B), grazers (C) and non-ruminants (D). Note that the relationship between frequency of ecological segregation and sexual body size dimorphism was only significant for browsers when conducting separate analyses for each feeding type. Note also that data points were weighted by the (square root) number of food/habitat indices in the analysis

regation was also variable among herbivores of different morphological feeding types ($df=3$, $\chi^2=88.361$, $P=0.006$). Furthermore, feeding type and level of sexual body size dimorphism interacted significantly (Fig. 1; $df=3$; $\chi^2=80.058$; $P=0.040$). When conducting separate analyses for each feeding type, there was only a significant effect of level of sexual body size dimorphism on frequency of ecological segregation among browsers ($n=12$, $df=1$, $\chi^2=9.782$, $P=0.021$). There was no significant negative or positive effect in intermediate feeders ($n=27$, $df=1$, $\chi^2=28.320$, $P=0.463$), grazers ($n=17$, $df=1$, $\chi^2=32.291$, $P=0.148$) or among non-ruminants ($n=9$, $df=1$, $\chi^2=14.408$, $P=0.169$), but note that variation in the level of sexual body size dimorphism was low for these feeding types. For the full model, levels of ecological segregation did not vary significantly with phylogenetic affiliation ($df=2$, $\chi^2=106.188$, $P=0.080$), among seasons with different resource levels ($df=1$, $\chi^2=100.904$, $P=0.642$) or among climatic regions ($df=1$, $\chi^2=100.649$, $P=0.613$). No other interactions were significant when incorporated into the model (all $P>0.15$). There was no

evidence of overdispersion in the model ($\chi^2=74.877$, $df=57$, $P>0.05$), thus supporting the assumption of independence in S_i .

Discussion

This study provides the first comparative evidence that frequency of ecological segregation increases with increasing levels of sexual body size dimorphism. However, this relationship was dependent on morphological feeding type (sensu Hofmann 1989), as frequency of ecological segregation only increased significantly with increasing levels of sexual body size dimorphism for browsers. This was thus contrary to the predictions of the IBH, since it is unlikely that incisor arcade breadth limits intake in browsers (du Toit 1995), and frequency of segregation was expected to be higher at low seasonal resource levels if the IBH applies (Clutton-Brock et al. 1982; Illius and Gordon 1987), which was not the case. Further, Conradt et al. (1999) have provided experimental evidence that habitat segregation in red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) on the Isle of Rhum, Scotland, was not caused by indirect competition. With the current knowledge, the NNH is thus a more likely mechanism behind ecological segregation than the IBH.

Feeding type is considered an important axis of niche differentiation in ruminants (Hofmann 1973, 1989), although recent empirical testing has demonstrated that body size is more important than feeding type for ruminant ecology (Gordon and Illius 1994, 1996; Robbins et

al. 1995; Mysterud 1998; Pérez-Barbería and Gordon 1999; but see Iason and Van Wieren 1999). There was also evidence that segregation did occur among virtually monomorphic species, although less frequently (Fig. 1, Appendix 1). There is substantial support for predictions from the RSH regarding spatial, temporal and intra-sexual patterns of segregation (Main and Coblenz 1990; Miquelle et al. 1992; Kohlmann et al. 1996; Main et al. 1996; Bleich et al. 1997; Appendix 1). One may speculate that different nursing strategies of young along the hider-follower continuum (Lent 1974) in different habitats may in part explain the effect of feeding type.

The lack of and tendency for a reversed relationship between frequency of ecological segregation and increasing levels of sexual body size dimorphism in intermediate feeders and grazers (Fig. 1) should be interpreted with caution. There were no data on sex-specific diet and habitat use from monomorphic species among intermediate feeders and grazers. This may reflect the fact that few such species exist (Weckerly 1998; Loison et al. 1999), but also, possibly, that segregation is not always sought in species with low levels of dimorphism. Illius and Gordon (1987) suggested that, based on their model, segregation should occur when males are about 20% larger than females. If there is a threshold difference in sexual body size dimorphism above which segregation occurs, this may not be possible to detect with the current data set with no grazers below this threshold.

There are some further problems with the current analysis. Phylogenetic affiliation was only partly accounted for by including family into the model, since, unfortunately, no phylogenetic method is available to treat data in logistic regression (Martins and Hansen 1996). Although phylogeny may pose a problem to any

comparative analysis (Harvey and Pagel 1991; Martins and Hansen 1996), body size and sexual body size dimorphism are not a conservative trait among large herbivores (Weckerly 1998; Loison et al. 1999), and for other taxonomic groups, sexual body size dimorphism may actually be population specific (Bondrup-Nielsen and Ims 1990; Yoccoz and Mesnager 1998). In ungulates, the effect of body size on activity was not affected when incorporating phylogeny into the analysis, whereas the effect of feeding type was lowered (Pérez-Barbería and Gordon 1999). Therefore, phylogeny may not be an important problem with regard to the effect of sexual body size dimorphism.

Since information regarding ecological segregation was extracted from a variety of sources using very different indices of segregation, only the presence or absence of segregation was recorded, and thus some information was lost. Conradt (1998a) provides a new index of social, spatial and habitat segregation that is stochastically unrelated to sex ratio, population density or group size, which have plagued other indices. This is a major step forward in the study of sexual segregation (Pérez-Barbería and Gordon 1998), and will make future comparative work easier. However, it may take decades before enough studies on ecological segregation using this index have been published to provide enough data for a new comprehensive comparative analysis.

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Appendix 1 (continued)

Species	Reg	FT	Male weight (g)	Female weight (g)	Year	January–March	April–May	June–August	September–December	Met	Reference
<i>Dama dama</i>	Te	IF	71,000	41,200		FQI: m>f FQI: m=f	FQI: m>f	FQI: m>f	FQI: m>f FQI: m>f	Rum	Takatsuki 1994 Asada and Ochiai 1996
						3/4 FCom: m≠f FQI: m>f	FCom: m≠f FQI: m<f	4/5 FCom: m≠f FQI: m<f FCom: m=f FQI: m>f	FCom: m≠f FQI: m=f FCom: m=f FQI: m>f	Fec Fec Fec	Loison et al. 1999 Putman et al. 1993 Kerridge and Bullock 1991
<i>Elaphus maximus</i>	Tr	NR	390,000	300,000	H: m=f FCom: m≠f	H: m≠f 3/3	H: m≠f	H: m≠f	H: m≠f	DO DO	Thirgood 1995 Apollonio et al. 1998
						FQI: m>f HFQIQn: m>f HS: m<f	FQI: m>f HFQIQn: m>f HS: m<f	FQI: m>f HFQIQn: m>f HS: m<f	FQI: m>f HFQIQn: m>f HS: m<f	DO? DO	Weckerly 1998 Owen-Smith 1988 Sukumar and Gadgil 1988
<i>Equus caballus</i>	Tr	NR	407,000	358,333		0/1	FCom: m=f	0/1		Fec	f: Wolfe et al. 1989; m: Feh 1990 Lenarz 1985
<i>Gazella granti</i>	Tr	IF	65,000	45,000		0/1 FCom: m=f	FCom: m=f	FCom: m=f	FCom: m=f	Fec	Loison et al. 1999 Spinage et al. 1980
<i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i>	Tr	CS	110,000	70,000	H: m≠f H: m≠f			3/3		DO DO	Weckerly 1998 Foster 1966 Foster and Dagg 1972
						H: m≠f HFQn: m<f FQI: m<f				DO	Pellew 1984
<i>Kobus ellipsiprinus</i>	Tr	GR	238,000	183,000	H: m≠f	0/2 FQI: m=f H: m=f	FQI: m=f H: m=f	0/2 FQI: m=f H: m=f	FQI: m=f H: m=f	DO, Fec DO	Loison et al. 1999 Tomlinson 1979 Wirtz and Kaiser 1988
										DO	Young and Isbell 1991
<i>Kobus leche</i>	Tr	GR	104,000	79,500	HFQI: m<f	1/1 H: m≠f	H: m≠f	1/1 H: m≠f	H: m≠f	DO	Loison et al. 1999 Williamson 1990
<i>Macropus fuliginosus</i>	Tr	NR	53,500	27,500		0/1 H: m=f		1/1 H: m≠f		DO	Weckerly 1998 Johnson and Bayliss 1981

Appendix 1 (continued)

Species	Reg	FT	Male weight (g)	Female weight (g)	Year	January–March	April–May	June–August	September–December	Met	Reference
<i>Macropus</i>	Tr	NR	66,000	26,500		2/2 F: m≠f H: m≠f		2/2 F: m≠f H: m≠f		Rum DO	Weckerly 1998 Newsome 1980 Johnson and Bayliss 1981
<i>Madoqua kir-kii</i>	Tr	CS	5,100	5,500		0/1 FCom: m=f		0/1 FCom: m=f	FCom: m=f	DO	Loison et al. 1999 Manser and Brotherton 1995
<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	Te	CS	87,500	56,000		5/7	HS: m<f	16/23 HS: m>f HA: m>f HFQn: m<f HS: m<f H: m≠f HW: m<f HFQn: m=f HA: m=f	HS: m>f	DO DO	Loison et al. 1999 Dasmann and Taber 1956 King and Smith 1980
							HFQl: m<f		H: m≠f HW: m<f HFQn: m=f HA: m=f	DO	Bowyer 1984
							H: m=f HS: m<f H: m≠f HW: m=f			RT DO	Schoen and Kirchoff 1985 Bowyer 1986
							H: m=f HA: m<f HW: m=f	H: m=f HA: m<f HW: m=f	H: m=f HA: m<f HW: m=f	RT	Ordway and Krausman 1986
							H: m≠f H: m≠f	H: m≠f H: m≠f	H: m≠f H: m≠f	RT DO	Ragotzkie and Bailey 1991 Weckerly 1993 Bowyer et al. 1996
							H: m≠f HW: m>f	H: m=f HS: m<f HP: m>f HW: m<f HFQn: m>f HFQl: m=f FQl: m>f H: m≠f HW: m<f	FQl: m=f	DO, Fec	Main and Coblenz 1996
							H: m≠f HW: m>f			RT	Nicholson et al. 1997
<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	Te	CS	68,000	45,000		6/10	FCom: m≠f	8/9 FCom: m≠f	FCom: m≠f FQl: m<f FCom: m=f	Rum Rum Rum	Loison et al. 1999 McCullough 1979 Korschgen et al. 1980 Warren and Krysl 1983
							FCom: m=f	H: m≠f		Rum RT Fec Rum	McCullough 1985 Tierson et al. 1985 Beier 1987, 1988
							FQl: m<f			DO DO RT	Scarbrough and Krausman 1988 McCullough et al. 1989 Beier and McCullough 1990

Appendix 1 (continued)

Species	Reg	FT	Male weight (g)	Female weight (g)	Year	January–March	April–May	June–August	September–December	Met	Reference
<i>Ovis dalli</i>	Te	GR	76,600	48,800				0/2 FCom: m=f FQl: m=f		Fec	Weckerly 1998 Seip and Bunnell 1985
<i>Ovis gmelini</i>	Te	GR	36,500	20,500	1/5	H: m≠f HA: m>f HS: m<f HFQn: m>f H: m≠f HS: m<f FCom: m=f H: m≠f HS: m=f	H: m≠f HA: m>f HS: m<f HFQn: m>f H: m≠f HS: m<f FCom: m=f H: m≠f HS: m=f	1/4		DO	Cransac et al. 1998 ^a Bon et al. 1995
<i>Pantholops hodgsoni</i>	Tr	IF	45,500	27,500		H: m=f HS: m=f FCom: m=f H: m≠f HS: m=f	H: m≠f HA: m>f HS: m<f HFQn: m>f H: m≠f HS: m<f FCom: m=f H: m≠f HS: m=f	H: m=f HS: m=f H: m≠f HS: m=f	H: m≠f HS: m<f FCom: m=f H: m≠f HS: m=f	DO Rum DO	Cransac and Hewison 1997 Cransac et al. 1997 Cransac et al. 1998
<i>Procapra picticaudata</i>	Tr							2/2 H: m≠f HA: m>f		DO	Schaller and Junrang 1988 Harris and Miller 1995
<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	Te	IF	136,667	88,867	3/4			2/2 H: m≠f HA: m<f		DO	Harris and Miller 1995
								20/22 H: m≠f HS: m<f FCom: m≠f HF: m>f HS: m<f HA: m=f FCom: m=f HA: m<f HP: m>f HFQn: m>f H: m≠f HS: m<f HFQl: m>f HA: m<f HS: m<f HFQn: m>f	H: m=f HF: m=f HS: m=f HA: m=f FCom: m=f	Fec DO	Loison et al. 1999 Helle 1980 Van Wieren and de Bie 1980
						HA: m≠f FCom: m≠f	HA: m=f FCom: m=f			RT Rum DO	Fuller and Keith 1981 Leader-Williams et al. 1981 Bergerud et al. 1984
						H: m≠f	HP: m>f HFQn Ql: m>f FQl: m>f H: m≠f HP: m>f HFQnQl: m>f			DO DO, Fec	Curatolo 1985 Simpson et al. 1985 Carruthers et al. 1986 Heard et al. 1996
						H: m=f	H: m≠f HP: m>f HFQnQl: m>f		H: m=f	DO	Jakimchuk et al. 1987

Appendix 1 (continued)

Species	Reg	FT	Male weight (g)	Female weight (g)	Year	January–March	April–May	June–August	September–December	Met	Reference
<i>Redunca arundinum</i>	Tr	GR	68,000	48,000		1/2 H: m≠f HS: m=f		H: m≠f 1/2 H: m≠f HS: m=f		DO	Chetkiewicz et al. 1992 Loison et al. 1999 Howard 1986
<i>Rupicapra pyrenaica</i>	Te	IF	30,500	23,500		4/4 H: m≠f H: m≠f FQI: m<f FCom: m≠f	H: m≠f H: m≠f FQI: m<f FCom: m≠f	4/4 H: m≠f H: m≠f FQI: m<f FCom: m≠f	H: m≠f H: m≠f FQI: m<f FCom: m≠f	DO DO, Fec	Couturier 1938 cited in Pepin et al. 1996 Lovari and Cosentino 1986 Pérez-Barbería et al. 1997
<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>	Te	IF	38,500	26,000		2/2 HFQI: m<f HA: m>f		2/2 HFQI: m<f HA: m>f		DO	Loison et al. 1999 Shank 1985
<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Te	NR	90,000	51,700	FCom: m=f		HS: m<f HFQn: m=f	1/2 HS: m<f HFQn: m=f	HS: m<f HFQn: m=f	Rum RT	Gallo Orsi et al. 1992 Groot Bruinderink et al. 1994 Spitz and Janeau 1995
<i>Tragelaphus streptoceros</i>	Tr	CS	257,000	170,000		1/2 H: m=f	H: m=f	1/2 H: m=f	H: m=f	DO	Loison et al. 1999 Simpson and Cowie 1967 reanalysed in du Toit 1995 du Toit 1995

^aLarder weight

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