

PROCEEDINGS



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Behavioural differences between red-partridges bred in colony and in couples	

BEHAVIOURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RED-PARTRIDGES BRED IN COLONY AND IN COUPLES

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Introduction

In nature the behaviour of the red partridges (RP) is characterized by two different periods: strictly monogamous behaviour during the mating season and associated in small groups behaviour before the mating season and during the rest season. In intensive breeding this natural behaviour can be artificially changed, so that flock mating systems can be used (The Game Conservancy, 1983; 1989). To analyse the behavioural changes we compared the behaviour of the partridges bred in colonies (3 males / 7 females, in pen on the ground: 1.60m*3.50m*h2.00m) with the behaviour of the partridges bred in fixed couples (outdoor wooden cages with metallic net floors: 1.20m*0.60m*h0.37m).

Materials and Methods

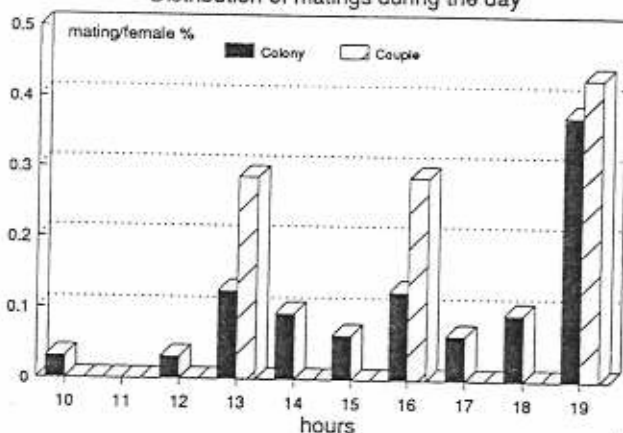
Three pens of colonies and four cages of couples were monitored (video tape technique) during three periods of the laying season (starting - middle and end). Each group was monitored all over the day. 168 hours were recorded in total (ad libitum sampling method, 4).

Results and Discussion

In the cages we observed the typical behaviour of the partridges characterized by the establishment of a fixed pair. In recorded cages no fighting occurred and no bird turned on its mate since the birds were paired very early (in late December) and male and female were chosen from the same winter flying pen (Mori et al., 1985).

The natural behaviour of the partridges was completely changed by high density colony breeding. It was not possible for the partridges to form lone couples since the male/female ratio differed from 1/1 (male/female ratio = 1/2.33) Notwithstanding the decrease of male incidence, the frequency of the observed mating per female increased see picture. A pecking order between the males with a consequent mating order was observed. Fighting between females, observed just prior to egg-laying, stopped very early but no dominant female was observed.

Distribution of matings during the day



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