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PROCEEDINGS





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CAUSES OF MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY IN EUROPEAN GRIFFON VULTURE (*GYPS FULVUS*) POPULATION IN SERBIA IN THE PERIOD OF 2018-2022 - POSTMORTAL FINDINGS

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Introduction: The European griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) is the only and strictly protected vulture species in Serbia and inhabits the gorges of the rivers Uvac, Trešnjica and Mileševka. Since 2018 a systematic survey of the morbidity and mortality causes in European griffon vultures in Serbia was conducted.

Materials and Methods: In the period of 2018-2022 twenty-five dead birds from nature were submitted to macroscopical and histopathological examination (HE, Ziehl-Neelsen, Grocott stains), followed by microbiological, parasitological and toxicological examinations, as well as molecular biological examinations (PCR) when needed.

Results: Trauma was the most frequent cause of morbidity and mortality (11/25) – fall, predation, interspecies altercation, intraspecies altercation, electrocution, sometimes followed by drowning. Inflammatory lesions were found in 5/25 birds, represented by lymphocytic myocarditis and pericarditis, fibrinonecrotic pneumonia, lymphocytic pancreatitis. Degenerative changes mainly in form of intracellular oedema and vacuolar degeneration were seen in hepatocytes, cardiomyocytes and tubular epithelial cells in kidneys (5/25 birds). Infectious agents were detected in 4/25 animals, confirming West Nile virus infection (lymphoplasmacytic encephalitis; PCR), tuberculosis (granulomatous pneumonia and aerosacculitis; Ziehl-Neelsen stain), clostridiosis (massive haemorrhages; isolation of *Clostridium* sp.) and aspergillosis (granulomatous pneumonia and aerosacculitis; Grocott stain, isolation of *Aspergillus fumigatus*). There was no evidence of poisoning.

Conclusions: Constant survey of morbidity and mortality in protected species such as the European griffon vulture is crucial for understanding health and infectious disease, and to contribute to their protection and conservation.