DWARFISM IN TWO ANTILLEAN MANATEES FROM COLOMBIA

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In March 1991, two Antillean Manatees (Trichechus manatus manatus), a 163 cm female and a 210 cm male, were accidentally captured by fishermen in the town of Magangué, Colombia. The animals were rescued and placed in a man-made reservoir in the town of Pinto. When examined in 1992 and 1993, both animals were unusually short and stout for their age and morphologically appeared to be dwarfed. They had hepatic problems indicated by abnormal blood serum levels and possibly hypothyroidism and/or hyperparathyroidism and a secondary renal problem. In 1995, the total body length for the female was 176 cm and the male 211 cm, a growth of 13 cm and 1 cm in length, respectively, in four years. Manatees in similar semicaptive conditions in Colombia normally averaged higher growth rates. Serum chemistry analysis and thyroid profiles of the two animals were normal in 1995. However, blood cell counts indicated they had microcytic hypochromic anemia. Both animals were placed under veterinary treatment in July 1995. The possible explanation of this unusually slow growth include: (1) nutritional deprivation or disorder(s), (2) hormonal inhibition due to exposure to herbicide(s) used on farms around the holding lake, and/or (3) a genetic condition.