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Companion and Wild Animals

Domestic Felines Hit on Highways in the Agreste of Pernambuco - Partial Data.

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Highways are currently essential, given their significant socioeconomic importance. Despite their great benefit, they are also major causes of negative impacts on local fauna. Vehicle traffic is increasing every day, promoting habitat alteration for animal species, causing changes due to negative impacts such as pollution and mortality. Even unaware of the risks present on highways, animals, whether wild or domestic, are still drawn to them primarily in search of food. However, other needs may arise such as seeking shelter and crossing from one side of the highway to another. Additionally, characteristics of adjacent environments can contribute to a higher number of road kills, such as the presence of buildings surrounding the road, which are attractive to these animals, increasing movements between the margins, such as residences and farms. Understanding the ecological characteristics of the surroundings of highways is increasingly necessary to mitigate these negative aspects and achieve positive results in terms of reducing collisions. Data collection is being conducted monthly during the morning shift, in two sections of BR-423, one from Garanhuns to Lajedo and the other from Garanhuns to Iati. Data collection has been ongoing since October 2023, with the assistance of an official vehicle from UFAPE, at an average speed of 50 km/h. Both sides of the highway, left and right, are checked for recording, requiring at least two observers, each responsible for one side of the road. When sighted, the animals hit are photographed and/or filmed using a cell phone, not only to aid in identification but also to send these images to LABEZoo-UFAPE for species confirmation in case of doubts, as well as to populate the database of species hit on these highways and georeference the locations for further data analysis. If carcass removal is necessary due to advanced deterioration, the surrounding area is cleared to prevent further accidents involving scavenging animals. The data collection is still ongoing, so the presented data is partial. Thus far, nine collisions involving domestic cats (*Felis catus*) have been recorded on BR-423. In the section linking Garanhuns to Lajedo, there were six recorded collisions, while in the segment from Garanhuns to Iati, there were three collisions of this species. There was a higher number of collisions on the stretch from Garanhuns to Lajedo, possibly due to the increased vehicle flow, higher speed, and also the larger number of buildings, such as residences near the highway.

Keywords: Road ecology, *Felis catus*, domestic cats, incidence of collisions.

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