

MANAGING SARCOPTIC MANGE IN IBEX: FIRST RESULTS OF A MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDY.

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The oldest and largest Alpine ibex *Capra ibex ibex* population of the Trento province inhabits the Marmolada-Monzoni mountains (eastern Alps), on the border with Veneto region (Belluno province). The size of the population constantly increased from 6 individuals (that had been taken from the Gran Paradiso National Park, in the western Alps) in 1978 to more than 500 ibexes in 2003. In addition to a health monitoring plan, that has been carried out since 2001, in 2003 radio-tracking was started in order to investigate some aspects of the behavioural ecology of ibex prior the onset of an epidemic of sarcoptic mange (that has been occurring at the neighbours of the population range since 2001). The study was primarily focused on ranging behaviour, group/population dynamics, and interactions with other wild/domestic ungulates. We considered all these topics as essentials in order to define a multidisciplinary-based management strategy for a population affected by sarcoptic mange. The sarcoptic mange epidemic started at the beginning of 2004 and, along with the effects of a severe winter, caused a high rate of mortality (about 140 carcasses were found in the period January/October). Here we present some preliminary results. By comparing data collected before and after the epidemic, we try to point out the effects of the disease on population size and structure.