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Age-Dependent Cranial Variations in *Mesocricetus brandti* (Mammalia: Rodentia) Distributed in Turkey

Nuri YİĞİT

Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Ankara University, 06100 Beşevler, Ankara - TURKEY

Abstract: Animals were assigned to four age groups according to molar wear, field notes and external and cranial measurements. Six days-old animals were referred to newborn, up to 30 days as young and thereafter as adult; animals with very worn molars were considered old. In addition to the statistical differences among age groups, it was determined that the main morphological differences were in the interorbital constriction, the shape of the braincase, the ridges and the position of occipital condyles. While the incisors and the first molars erupted in seven days-old animals, the second and third molars began to erupt after seven and 30 days, respectively. Thus, it was concluded that the characteristics of animals younger than 30 days-old, and the cranial variations in the skull morphologies of adult and old animals should not be taken into consideration in taxonomic evaluations.

Key Words: *Mesocricetus brandti*, age variation, cranial variation, Turkey

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