



IMMOBILIZATION OF BROWN BEARS (*URSUS ARCTOS* L.) IN BULGARIA

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Summary

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Safe and effective immobilization of brown bears (*Ursus arctos*) is essential for research and management purposes. Fast induction of anaesthesia, maintenance of healthy vital rates, and predictable recoveries are priorities. From April 2014 to June 2017, 8 free-ranging bears from different age, sex and body mass were captured with Aldrich leg-hold trap and immobilized for the purposes of GPS/GSM collaring and tracking. The animals were remotely sedated with a dart gun. For the immobilization of the bears Zoletyl®50 or Zoletyl®100 at a dosage of 5 mg/kg were used, which provided consistent anaesthesia without apparent adverse effects, and smooth recovery. The time to full sedation varied from 4 to 51 min, correlated to the body mass. The time to first signs of recovery after the initial injection was within the range of 21 min to 3 hours. The animal movement for the first three days and the distance from the capture locations were further analyzed to assess animal fitness after the immobilization.

Key words: brown bear, immobilization, recovery, Zoletyl