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A Note on the Anatomy and Physiology of a Porcupine

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A male porcupine, about 16 lbs. in weight, from the Animal Centre, Khon Kaen University was accidently killed. A postmortem examination was carried out.

It was noted that the porcupine has 15 pairs of ribs and 7 pairs out of the total are floating ribs. The clavicle is cartilage rather than bone.

The abdominal aorta and adrenal glands are rather big relative to its body size.

The spiny hair or Quills are arranged in groups of 3 to 10. Their roots are imbedded in the subcutaneous layer.

The teeth are similar to those of other rodents but bigger in size. At the root of the tongue, there are two rows of taste buds; each row containing seven small buds. Other small taste buds were scattered in the vicinity. The epiglottis is rather big in comparison with the body size.

The stomach is big and the duodenum is about 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. The appendix which is 10 inches long and 2 inches in diameter is presumably the place for fermentation. The sheep-like faeces suggests the reabsorption of water in the large intestine.

Testes is found beneath the subcutaneous layer of the inner sides of the thighs. Vas deferens lie under the subcutaneous tissue until they reach the crus of the penis. The penis flexes within subcutaneous layer and emerges through the skin with the glans pointing towards posterior.

N.B. Porcupines in Thailand (Old World Porcupines) are classified in the Family of Hystricidae.

Diet : Vegetables, roots and fruits.

Habit : Stay in deep burrows (approximately 1.5 to 2.5 meter deep author) during the day - time and search for food at night.

Mating : Usually mating takes place at night, but on one occasion it was observed during the daytime at Khon Kaen.

Gestation period : About 2 months; a female gives birth to 2 or 3 young.

Reference : Larousse Encyclopedia of Animal Life. (1967) *Hamlyn. London - Toronto.*