

PARENTAL CARE IN SOCIAL VOLE, *MICROTUS SOCIALIS*:  
EXPERIENCED MALES ARE MORE ACTIVE THAN FEMALES

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Aim of the study was the examination of sex difference, or lack thereof, in parental behaviours of inexperienced and experienced pairs of the social vole. Observations were carried out on 8 inexperienced pairs (rearing their 1st litter) and 10 experienced pairs (rearing their 2nd or 3rd litter). The following data were recorded: time spent in the nest by the male and female (minutes per 1 h), duration of pup grooming (s per 1 h), frequency of pup retrieval, frequency of manipulations with bedding, bringing nest material and food (vegetables, seeds) into the nest chamber. Both parents were found to contribute to the care of young during the whole observation period (21 days from parturition). All pairs exhibited permanent nest cohabitation. Paternal activities included nest construction, food caching, huddling over, brooding and grooming the young. Comparison of direct parental behaviours revealed a lack of both sex and experience difference in the nest residence. Besides, experienced females were found to be not different from inexperienced ones in respect to pup grooming. In contrast, experienced males were significantly more active in pup grooming than inexperienced ones. As for indirect parental care, both experienced males and females were more responsive than inexperienced ones, especially concerning manipulations with bedding, but the difference was found to be significant in females only. The present findings indicate a high rate of paternal care, especially direct one, in social vole. Increased tactile stimulation (brooding and grooming) of young by male is considered a proximate mechanism promoting evolution of family group mode of life in voles and other related rodents.