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Origin of Crocodile farming

Crocodiles (*Crocodylinae*) are the large aquatic reptiles belonging to the family of Crocodylidae and they **are the oldest species on earth**. They live in the tropical areas of *Africa, Asia, Australia* and *America* and in particular in all types of freshwater to slightly brackish water bodies.

Crocodiles have been hunted for their oil, skin, claws, meat, medical and religious purposes. There about **23 species of crocodiles in the world**; of which 8 species of *alligators and caimans*, 2 species of gharials and false gharials and 13 true crocodiles. Crocodiles have been farmed since the early 20th century, because crocodile farming may be a very lucrative business.

Crocodiles are carnivores, they have a slow metabolism which allows them to go months without food. They life span is between 30-75 years, they lay about 10-60 eggs a time and it takes 55-110 days before the eggs hatch.

Four main types of crocodiles found in Africa

- Nile Crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*)
- Dwarf crocodile (*Osteolaemus tetraspis*)
- West African crocodile (*Crocodylus suchus*)
- Slender-snouted crocodile (*Mecistops cataphractus*)

Breeding crocodiles

Crocodile farming is a form of intensive animal husbandry. Which means that they require high maintenance in handling and that is **why a lot of practice and training is required.**

- **Ranching** refers to the removal of animals from the wild at young age and then placed in an enclosed area. Under the ranching system, DLRM (2014) stated that the **eggs are abundant and naturally vulnerable part of the life cycle, and that is why collecting eggs from the wild is the safest strategy.** Where they are hatched on the farm and nurtured to ensure minimal stress levels on the hatchling and their skin is not damaged upon handling. The hatchlings should be kept in concrete nursery tanks and a small bathing trough.
- **Captive breeding** refers to animal husbandry of crocodiles, which involves the **grouping of crocodiles in different enclosures according to age** (e.g. the breeding groups of crocodiles are kept in large enclosures, male and females, and the hatchlings are kept in one enclosure); **all the crocodiles are provided with a pond and feeding pool.** The main reason for the separation of crocodiles according to age is **to avoid the hatchlings from being preyed on and also makes feeding a lot easier.**

The area should be fenced off with perimeter wire to ensure that the crocodiles do not escape from the farm and preventing other animals from entering the farm.

Factors to consider when building a farm ranch for crocodile:

- Geographical location
- Age of crocodiles
- Management practices
- Stocking density

Importance of crocodiles

- Crocodile **meat is exotic** and it tastes like *chicken, crab or pork*. Crocodile meat is **very tender and juicy**, it is highly priced in certain restaurants (Most especially in the European countries). In addition, crocodile meat is **high in protein, low in fat with a low cholesterol and rich in Omega-3**.
- **Teeth and bones are used for making jewellery** such as earrings and bracelets .
- Body parts has been used for **medicinal purposes in China**.
- Crocodiles often are kept in an enclosed area for **tourist attraction purpose**.

Crocodile is one of the most dangerous animal for humans. Crocodile farming is gaining popularity as a very profitable business, but requires a large amount of initial investment. In order to succeed a lot of practice, experience and patience is required.

References

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