The smallest of all otter species, Asian small-clawed otters (*Amblonyx cinereus*) are highly social and live in large family groups in the wild. In captivity, Asian small-clawed otters are frequently housed in single-sex groups to maintain their social nature while accommodating management needs, including temporary breeding restrictions and exhibit space limitations. These single-sex groups, however, are not always harmonious and often require separation of individuals at unpredictable times due to aggression. In some cases, the aggression within the group leads to permanent separation and group reorganization. Furthermore, in many instances, the underlying cause of this aggression among otters is unknown, leaving few management options for prevention.

The Asian Small-Clawed Otter Species Survival Plan® (SSP) has recommended the use of Deslorelin (Suprelorin®) implants, a gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH) agonist, to both temporarily contracept females and manage aggression and other behavioral issues in male and female groups. Deslorelin had been shown to be a safe and effective contraceptive in many species, but little data exists on its application in Asian small-clawed otters. Accordingly, in this study supported by the AZA Conservation Endowment Fund, our objective was to assess the effect of Deslorelin on reproductive hormones and aggressive behavior in single sex group-housed Asian small-clawed otters.

For this study, seven Asian small-clawed otter single-sex groups (26 otters total) were monitored over four months for fecal hormone levels (androgens, estrogens and progestins) and behavior, comparing groups implanted with Deslorelin (four groups) to those without implants (three groups). Our results showed that otters with Deslorelin implants had significantly lower hormone levels compared to non-implanted otters, indicating that Deslorelin may be an effective contraceptive in this species. However, aggression among otters was observed in six of seven groups, suggesting that Deslorelin implantation and subsequent reduction of hormone levels, does not necessarily reduce the occurrence of aggression within these single sex groups.

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