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Growth, food conversion and agonistic behaviour in common dentex

Juveniles of the common dentex (Dentex dentex) (2.4 g mean weight), were grown over a 6 week period, fed exclusively on a commercial sea bream diet or an isocaloric moist pellet diet, which was produced on site. Ambient temperature (24.4-26.2 °C) and oxygen content (4.8-5.9 mg/L), as well as the relatively low stocking density (max. 2.62 kg/m3) provided favourable rearing conditions. Survival (63.8% vs 51.6%), specific growth rates (6.1% vs 4.5%) and food conversion efficiency (115.8% vs 76.3%) were considerably elevated in the group fed on moist pellets. The growth performance parameters recorded are considered to be favourable for aquaculture requirements. Agonistic behaviour (particular biting of the tail) was found to be the main cause of the continuous mortality that occurred in both feed groups (78% and 64.8% of total mortality in the dry- and moist-pellet group, respectively). These biting attacks targeted the smallest individuals in a tank, whose mean individual weight made up 49-62% (with dry pellet diet) and 28.9-46.6% (with moist pellet diet) of the respective mean weights. The results indicate a strong relationship between nutrition, size variation and agonistic behaviour in the rearing of cornmon dentex juveniles.

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