MICRURUS FRONTALIS (Coral Snake). MALE COMBAT.
Combat rituals have been observed in numerous snake genera,
One explanation for such behavior is male-male competition for
access to reproductive females (Bogert and Roth 1966. Amer. Mus.

Micrurus frontalis is an elapid whose reproductive behavior is
largely unknown. We report the first observation in the field of a
combat ritual between two male M. frontalis (SVL = 875 and 836
mm). On 12 April 1994 (ca. 1230 h) in Santa Rita city (29°51'S,
51°16'W), Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, the snakes were found shel-
tered under rocks. They were aligned horizontally with their bodi-
ies and tails intertwined and their heads raised slightly (Fig. 1).
The two males kept their heads side by side while moving forward
and trying to hover over each other. When captured, one everted
the hemipenis. Subsequently, these males were deposited in the
Museum Collection of the Museu de Ciências Naturais, Fundação
Zoobotânica do Rio Grande do Sul (MCN 11424, 11435).

In addition to our field observation, two captive males were
twice observed engaging in a combat ritual in the same season. In
every case, the postures were very similar to those of Austrelapis
superbus (Shine and Allen 1980. Victorian Nat. 97:188–190), but
different from those reported for other elapids. The horizontal
interwining of the body without vertical posturing of the head
and anterior trunk appears similar to the behavior of colubrids
such as Pituophis melanoleucus affinis (Bogert and Roth, op. cit.).

We thank M. G. Salomão for helpful comments and revisions
of the manuscript, O. A. V. Marques for fruitful discussions on
the subject, and V. X. da Silva for preparing the illustration.

Fig. 1. Combat ritual between male Micrurus frontalis.

Submitted by SELMA MARIA ALMEIDA-SANTOS,
Instituto Butantan, Av. Vital Brasil, 1500, CEP 05503-900, São
Paulo, SP - Brazil, LUIS FELIPE SCHMIDT DE AGUIAR
and RAFAEL LUCCHESI BAILESTRIN. Núcleo de Oftologia
de Porto Alegre, Rua Salvador França, 1427, CEP 90690-000,
Porto Alegre, RS - Brazil.

[Image of Micrurus frontalis]

Herpetological Review 29(4), 1998