Systematic & Applied Acarology 17(3): 243–250. ISSN 1362-1971

Article

Ticks (Acari: Ixodidae) parasitizing endemic and exotic wild mammals in the Esteros del Iberá wetlands, Argentina

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Abstract

Five species of ticks belonging to the genera *Amblyomma*, *Haemaphysalis* and *Rhipicephalus* were recorded from endemic and exotic wild mammals in the Esteros del Iberá wetlands, Argentina. Adults and immature stages of *Amblyomma dubitatum* were found on *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*, *Sus scrofa*, *Axis axis* and *Myrmecophaga tridactyla*. Larvae and nymphs of *A. dubitatum* were collected on *Bubalus bubalis*, *Lepus europaeus*, *Monodelphis dimidiata* and on the rodents *Cavia aperea*, *Scapteromys aquaticus*, *Oligoryzomys flavescens* and *Akodon azarae*. One male of *Amblyomma nodosum* was associated with *M. tridactyla*; specimens of *Haemaphysalis juxtakochi* were found on *A. axis*, *S. scrofa* and *Mazama gouazoubira*; and *Rhipicephalus* (*Boophilus*) *microplus* was detected on *Blastocerus dichotomus*. Adults of *Amblyomma triste* were collected on *B. dichotomus*, *S. scrofa* and *H. hydrochaeris*, while immatures of this tick were recorded on *M. dimidiata*, *A. azarae*, *S. aquaticus*, *O. flavescens* and *H. hydrochaeris*. In addition to elucidating tick-host associations, the findings of this survey are biomedically important. Although the tick fauna of Esteros del Iberá is limited, some species, such as *A. triste* and *R.* (*B.*) *microplus*, are recognized vectors of pathogenic agents infecting humans and animals. Also, a large number of the Esteros del Iberá collection records were for ticks from exotic (*S. scrofa*, *A. axis*, *B. bubalis*, *L. europaeus*) or reintroduced (*M. tridactyla*) mammals, suggesting that the introduction of these mammals may result in the amplification of tick populations in the study area, with potential deleterious effects on the endemic fauna.

Key words: ticks, Ixodidae, wild mammals, Esteros del Iberá, Argentina

Introduction

Taxonomic knowledge of the parasitic arthropods associated with a particular host community is fundamental to studies of the influence of these parasites on host ecology and to attempts to evaluate their potential as vectors of infectious diseases. From a biomedical standpoint, ticks are among the most important parasitic arthropods (Hoogstraal 1985; Jongejan & Uilenberg 2004)—they are hematophagous ectoparasites of terrestrial tetrapods whose role as vectors of animal and human pathogens is widely recognized (Sonenshine and Mather 1994; Jongejan and Uilenberg 2004). About 198 species of ticks belonging to the families Argasidae (soft ticks) and Ixodidae (hard ticks) occur in the Neotropical Zoogeographic Region (Guglielmone *et al.* 2003; Nava *et al.* 2009, 2010b), and many of these are potential vectors of pathogens to mammals (Guglielmone *et al.* 2003).

The Esteros del Iberá is a large wetland complex spanning over 13,000 km^2 in the Argentinean province of Corrientes (Canziani *et al.* 2003). This macrosystem is one of the most important

