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Article

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Ixodid ticks of *Hydrochoerus isthmius* Goldman, 1912 (Rodentia: Caviidae) in Panama

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Abstract

We report parasitism by the ixodid ticks *Amblyomma mixtum*, *Amblyomma oblongoguttatum* and *Amblyomma tapirellum* on the lesser capybara or poncho, *Hydrochoerus isthmius*, in Panama. These data are integrated with earlier Panamanian records of *Amblyomma auricularium* and *Rhipicephalus sanguineus* s.l. from *H. isthmius* and compared with known records of tick species parasitizing the capybara, *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*, in South America. Our collections do not permit us to determine whether the poncho is a significant host for *A. mixtum*, *A. oblongoguttatum* or *A. tapirellum*; rather, our results should be viewed as contributing to the discussion of potential hosts of these tick species.

Key words: Ponchos, ticks, opportunistic parasitism, Panama

Introduction

The genus *Hydrochoerus* comprises two species of semiaquatic rodents: the capybara, *H. hydrochaeris* L., 1766, which occurs east of the Andes from Venezuela to northern Argentina; and the lesser capybara or poncho, *H. isthmius* Goldman, 1912, which ranges from northwestern Venezuela to eastern Panama (Woods *et al.* 2005, Moreira *et al.* 2013, Dunnun 2014). These animals are important members of natural ecosystems because they are large grazers and important prey species. Additionally, they are often commercially bred for their meat and leather. Moreover, when in proximity to human habitations, they may play a role in regional zoonoses, especially those involving tick-borne pathogens (Pacheco *et al.* 2007, Miranda *et al.* 2011, Szabó *et al.* 2013).

Although the poncho was described from Panama at the beginning of the 20th century, its biology remains little known, particularly with respect to parasites. The only parasites previously recorded for the poncho are the nematode *Habronema clarki* (Foster and Chitwood, 1937) and the ticks *Amblyomma auricularium* (Conil, 1878) and *Rhipicephalus sanguineus* s.l. (Latreille, 1806) (Fairchild *et al.* 1966). In recent years, increasing interest in tick-borne pathogens has stimulated initiatives aimed at understanding the role of domestic animals and wildlife in the ecology of tick-borne zoonoses. Accordingly, we present herein new data on ticks parasitizing ponchos at two sites in Panama.