CASE REPORT

OCCURRENCE OF Ornithonyssus bacoti (Hirst, 1931) IN AN INDIAN GERBIL TATERA INDICA, IN KERALA

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Introduction
A fresh dead specimen of Tatera indica (Muridae, Rodentia) was obtained from Kerala Agricultural University main campus at Vellanikkara, Trichur District, Kerala on 20th May 1996. The cause of death may be due to poisoning, as no external injuries were found. On examination, five live ectoparasites could be collected-three from the basal region of the pinnae, one from the upper back and the other from the abdominal region. Studies made on the identification of this ectoparasite are presented in this paper.

Results and Discussion
The parasites were identified as Ornithonyssus bacoti belonging to the family Macronyssidae of the suborder Mesostigmata. The body has sclerotised shields or plates on the dorsal side. The dorsal plate is narrower and tapering gradually to a blunt point.

Numerous setae are present on this plate and they are of same size as those present on the nearby areas of the segment. The sternal plate on ventral side has three pairs of setae. The anal opening is situated on the anterior half of the anal plate.

Mites of the genera Laelaps, Androlaelaps, Trombicula, Cheyletus, Radfordia, Leptotrombidium, Listrophorides and Odontocarus have been reported in Indian Gerbils (Nadachatram & Traub, 1966; Alfred, 1969; Srivastava & Wattal, 1975; Kudryashova, 1976; Kudryashova et al., 1976; Sandhu & Kapoor, 1977; Fain & Hyland, 1980), but not Ornithonyssus bacoti. This mite is called as topical rat mite, but is cosmopolitan occurring in both tropical and temperate regions of the world. The parasites are called as topical rat mites, small marsupials (Kettle, 1990) and wild rodents, wild carnivores, domestic cat and man (Flynn, 1973; Soulsby, 1982).

Being haematophagus, high populations of this mite can cause death of their host by exsanguination (Kettle, 1990). Ornithonyssus bacoti is a vector of rickettsial organisms causing murine typhus, rickettsial pox and Q fever caused by Coxiella burnetii; it is also a vector of rodent filarial worms. It is also reported to cause severe dermatitis in man (Ram, et al., 1985) and hence of public health importance.

References