UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

ECTO-AND ENDO-PARASITES IN RODENTS AND SHREWS FROM
FOUR HABITATS IN SELANGOR AND NEGERI SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA

PARAMASVARAN SITHAMBARAM

FPV 2009 12
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MASTERS OF SCIENCE
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA
2009
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By

PARAMASVARAN SITHAMBARAM

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science

Jan 2009
Abstract of thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science.

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Jan 2009

Chairman : Associate Professor Dr. Rehana Abdullah Sani, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Faculty : Veterinary Medicine

The objectives of this study were to determine the rodent host species, to identify the parasites they harbor and to record those parasites that are of zoonotic importance. A total of 204 rodents were examined from four selected habitats in the states of Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The rodents were captured alive from five urban sites in Kuala Lumpur, rice fields in Tanjung Karang, a coastal area in Port Dickson and a Primary Forest Reserve in Gombak, Selangor. Standard laboratory parasitological and statistical analyses were used. Fourteen different rodent species belonging to three different mammalian groups were identified. Rattus rattus diardii was the predominant rodent species (67%) trapped and examined. The study revealed 53.9 % of the rodents examined had at least one species of helminth. A total of 21 helminth species (7 cestodes, 12 nematodes, 1 trematode and 1 acanthocephala) were recovered. Gongylonema neoplasticum, Nippostrongylus brasiliensis, Hepatojarkus malayae, Heterakis supomosa, Capillaria hepatica,
Raillietina sp., Hymenolepis nana, H. diminuta, Hymenolepis sp. and Taenia taeniaeformis were the predominant helminth species identified. The helminths of zoonotic importance: Capillaria hepatica, Rictularia tani, Angiostrongylus sp., Taenia taeniaeformis, Hymenolepis nana, H. diminuta, Raillietina sp, Moniliformis dubius, Armillifer moniliformis were also found. Trypanosoma sp. was the only blood parasite found in the 204 rodents examined. Forty seven percent of the rodents were found to be infested with at least one of the 20 species of ecto-parasites recovered. The common ecto-parasites recovered were Laelaps nuttali, L. echidn anus, L. sculpturata, Polyplax spinulosa, Hoplopleura pacifica, Isodes granulatus, Dermacentor sp. and Haemaphysalis sp. The ecto-parasites that are of human medical importance are Laelaps sp., Gahrlepia sp., Walchiella sp., Ornithonyssus bacoti, Haemaphysalis sp., Dermacentor sp., Amblyomma sp. and Ixodes sp. and Xenopsylla cheopis. A total of 147 ecto-parasites (ticks, n=15, fleas, n= 31, lice, n=30 and mites, n=71) were recovered from the rodents. Rattus rattus diardi was found to harbour a wide range of ecto and endo-parasites some of which have been identified as zoonotic. There was no significant relationship between the sex of rodents and parasitic infestation. However, significant association was seen between ecto and endo-parasitic infection and habitats. Rodents from the urban habitats comparatively were found to harbour a wider range of parasites, some of which are of human medical importance.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia, sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

EKTO DAN ENDOPARASIT RODENSIA DAN TUPAI DARI EMPAT HABITAT DI SELANGOR DAN NEGERI SEMBILAN, MALAYSIA

Oleh
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Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan spesis rodensia perumah dan parasit yang dibawa olehnya dan seterusnya mengenalpasti parasit yang berkepentingan zoonotik. Sejumlah 204 rodensia dari empat habitat berlainan yang terpilih di Selangor dan Negeri Sembilan telah diperiksa. Rodensia ini telah ditangkap hidup dari lima lokasi bandar di sekitar Kuala Lumpur, sawah padi di Tanjung Karang, persisiran pantai di Port Dickson dan di Hutan Simpan Primer di Gombak, Selangor. Analisis makmal dikendalikan mengikut prosidur kajian parasitologi dan program statistik yang piawai. Empat belas spesis rodensia yang berlainan dari tiga kumpulan mamalia yang berbeza telah dikenalpasti. Rattus rattus diardii adalah spesis rodensia yang paling banyak diperangkap dan diperiksa (67%). Kajian ini mendapati 53.9% rodensia yang diperiksa dijangkiti oleh sekurang-kurangnya satu spesis helmin. Sejumlah 21 spesis helmin (7 sestod, 12 nematod, 1 trematod dan 1 akantosefala) telah ditemui. Gongylonema neoplasticum, Nippostrongylus brasiliensis, Hepatojarkus malayae, Heterakis spumosa, Capillaria hepatica, Raillietina sp. Hymenolepis nana, H. diminuta, Hymenolepis sp. dan Taenia taeniaeformis adalah
spesis helmin yang paling dominan. Helmin yang penting dari segi perubatan: 
*Capillaria hepatica*, *Rictularia tani*, *Angiostrongylus* sp., *Taenia taeniaeformis*,
*Hymenolepis nana*, *Hymenolepis diminuta*, *Taenia taeniaeformis* juga ditemui. 
adalah satu-satunya parasit darah yang ditemui pada 204 rodensia yang diperiksa.
Empat puluh tujuh peratus rodensia didapati diinfestasi oleh sekurang-kurangnya
satu spesis dari 20 spesis ektoparasit yang ditemui. Ektoparasit akari yang paling
banyak ditemui adalah *Laelaps nuttali*, *L. echidmanus*, *L. sculpturata*, *Polyplax
spinulosa*, *Hoplopleura pacifica*, *Ixodes granulatus* and *Dermacentor* sp. dan
*Haemaphysalis* sp. Ektoparasit yang penting dari sudut perubatan pula adalah
*Laelaps* sp., *Gahrlepia* sp., *Walchiella* sp., *Ornthonyssus bacoti*, *Haemaphysalis
sp.*, *Dermacentor* sp., *Amblyomma* sp. and *Ixodes* sp. dan *Xenopsylla cheopis*. *Rattus
rattus diardi* didapati membawa pelbagai ekto dan endoparasit, sesetengahnya
zoonotik. Analisis statistik tidak menunjukkan hubungan yang berkeertian di antara
jantina rodensia dan infestasi ekto dan endoparasit tetapi hubungan berkeertian
didapati diantara habitat dan infestasi parasit. Rodensia dari habitat bandar didapati
dijangkiti oleh pelbagai jenis species ekto dan endoparasit yang sebahagiannya
adalah zoonotik berbanding dengan habitat lain.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my supervisory committee, Associate Professor Dr. Rehana Abdullah Sani (Chairperson), Dr. Latiffah Hassan and Dr. Hanjeet Kaur Sandhu for the invaluable supervision, advice, encouragement and guidance.

I would like to express my thanks to the director of IMR and the head of Epidemiology Unit, Dr. Amal Nasir Mustaffa for their constant encouragement, support and for the allocation of the research grant. Thanks are also due to the Public Services Department (JPA) for sponsoring my studies.

I am deeply indebted and grateful to Dr. M. Krishnasamy and Mr. John Jeffery, for their constant encouragement, guidance and support throughout the study period. I also like to thank the following people: Dr. Lye Mun San, Dr. Ng Kok Han, Dr. Lee Han Lim and Dr. Indra Vythilingam for their support, encouragement and motivation.

I would like to thank the Director and staff of the Pest Control Division of Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur for the use of their facilities in Setapak and for the assistance in trapping rats in the wet markets.
Special thanks to Ms Sumarni Mohd Ghazali, Mr. Santhana Raj, Mr. Lim Kuang Hock and Mr. Palanisamy for their technical assistance.

My heartiest thanks go to my wife, son and other family members for their moral support and encouragement.

Above all my thanks are due to my spiritual guru Sri Satya Sai Baba for HIS grace and blessings.
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 11\textsuperscript{th} November 2008 to conduct the final examination of Paramasvaran s/o Sithambaram on his thesis entitled “Ecto and Endo-Parasites In Rodents From Four Habitats In The States Of Selangor And Negeri Sembilan” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia (P.U.A. (A) 106) 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Masters of Science degree.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

PARAMASVARAN S/O SITHAMBARAM

Date: 12th FEB. 2009
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<td>cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>gm</td>
<td>Gram</td>
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<td>kg</td>
<td>KiloGram</td>
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<td>km</td>
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<td>mL</td>
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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Rodents are a key mammalian group and found in many environments throughout the world. They constitute more than 42% of the known mammalian species (Singleton, et al., 2003). Rodents are a major agricultural, urban and social pest across many of the developed and developing world. In Asia alone the amount of grain eaten by rodents in the rice fields each year would provide enough to feed 200 million Asians for a year (Singleton, et al., 2003). Many of these rodent species are also reservoirs of organisms that cause debilitating diseases in human and livestock (Singleton, et al., 2003). Nearly four million rats are born every day in the developing nations and they are known to spread worldwide more than 60 diseases that can infect humans (Lye Hinds, 2003). Rodent-borne diseases are spread directly to humans through bite wounds, consuming food and water contaminated with rodent faeces and urine. Diseases from rodents are also spread indirectly to humans by way of ticks, mites and fleas (Nadchatram et al. 1967; Salleh et al., 2003).

The epidemiology of many of the rodent-borne diseases in Asia and in particular Malaysia is poorly understood. For instance little is known about which species of rodents are the major reservoirs of diseases and how long does the infective stages of helminths and protozoa which originates from rodents persists in domestic and rural environments and how these agents are transmitted under natural conditions.

There is a rising concern that rodents may pose health risk to humans because of the increased movement of people between rural and urban areas and between
countries. The increased clearance of natural habitats for development further promotes rodent-human contact thus providing an ideal situation for disease transmission. The opening up of mountainous region for agricultural activities in north-eastern Tanzania brought about rodent-human interaction and the spread of plague (Makundi, et al., 2003).

The aim of this study is to determine the prevalence of ecto and endo-parasitic infections in rodents found in four distinct habitats (urban, rice field, coastal and forest) in the states of Selangor and Negeri Sembilan in Peninsular Malaysia to assess the potential risk of diseases that are harmful to man and domestic animals.

The four habitats were selected for their unique ecological settings. The rice field (agriculture) urban sites represent habitats in which rodents tend to live in close proximity to human activities. The coastal site of Port Dickson was selected for its popularity for picnics, camping and other water sports recreational activities which generates food waste that attracts rodents to this habitat. This closeness provides ample opportunity for rodent to contaminate the environment thus facilitating transmission of zoonotic pathogens and parasites to humans directly or indirectly via their arthropods.

The Gombak forest reserve site was chosen for its close proximity to an Orang Asli village where the increased frequency of human activities into this forest for hunting, illegal logging and other illegal activities could have disturbed the natural habitat of the wild rodents. This study will reveal whether there has been any marked changes in the forest rodent population and their parasite diversity due to
the pressure of human activities. The information obtained from this study can also
be used to asses the risk of zoonotic parasite transmission to humans and animals
and also to facilitate future efforts in protecting the integrity of the primary forest’s
unique ecosystem and animal diversity.

The specific objectives of the study are to:
1) To determine the species of rodents found in four different habitats.
2) To identify the ecto and endo-parasites from the caught rodents and to determine
the parasite species distribution.
3) To determine the blood parasites in the rodents.

These objectives will be addressed using the following hypothesis:

1) Rodent species diversity is dependent on habitat.
2) Ecto and endo-parasites found in the rodents is influenced by the location
where the rodent host habituate.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Rodents particularly those belonging to the Muridae family in Malaysia have been well studied because of their medical and economic importance, yet comparatively, very little is known in Malaysia about the epidemiology of the ecto and endo-parasites associated with them; far less on the types of terrain in which the rodents are prevalent.

Parasites in rats (Murids) particularly helminths belonging to the four major groups; Nematoda, Cestoda, Trematoda and Acanthocephala have not been completely described or studied in Malaysia.

2.2 NEMATODES

The earliest reports of nematodes from Malaysian murids and other animals were provided by Alessandrini (1905) and Adams (1933), who described mostly parasites from domestic animals. The nematode parasites identified from the rodent host were *Syphacia obvelata*, *Cyclodontostomum purivisi* and *Heterakis* sp. from the large intestine of rats caught in Raub. They also recorded another species of *Ancylostoma malayenum* (Alessandrini, 1905) from a rat in Seremban and an oxyurid (*Oxyuris syphacia obvelata*) in rats from Taiping and Pahang. There was a long lapse of interest following which a batch of worms from murids from Pulau
Jarak were identified by Buckely (quoted in Audy et al., 1950) to contain a strongyloid. This worm was subsequently described by Yeh (1955) as *Hepatojarkus malayae*, representing a new species and genus. The nematodes *Capillaria hepatica*, *Rictularia tani* and *Nippostrongylus* sp. were also recognized in the same collection. A larger collection of parasites were examined from other parts of Malaysia around this time and it included worms from murids. These murid worms were examined by Sandosham (1954 and 1957) under the four major helminth groups in which the incidence of infection was recorded. Subsequently, nematode parasites from unidentified house rats were identified by Hall (1916). They were *Strongyloides ratti*, *Angiostrongylus cantonensis*, *Nippostrongylus muris* and *Gongylonema neoplasticum*. Four other undetermined species of *Capillaria*, *Syphacia*, *Protospirura* and *Mastophorus* were also mentioned.

A number of unnamed filarial worms were reported from rats. The first was said to be a new genus of filarial heart worm belonging to the Subfamily Splendidofilariae which was isolated from *Rattus sabanus*, *Rattus whitheadi* and *Rattus muelleri* by Sivanandam, et al. (1965). They also found another filarial worm from the heart, lung and the liver of *Rattus sabanus*. The fourth species was recovered by Sandosham and Sivanandam (1966) also from the heart of *Rattus sabanus*.

In 1963, Balasingham redescribed the hookworms of *Cyclodontostomum purvisi* from Malayan giant rats. Very few people have described the major groups of helminths in Malaysia during this time. Miyazaki and Dunn (1965) reported *Gnathostoma malayae* from *Rattus surifer*. First Sandosham (1957) introduced to a