



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***DIVERSITY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY OF BOVINE HAEMOPARASITES
AND THEIR POTENTIAL ARTHROPOD VECTORS IN PENINSULAR
MALAYSIA***

OLA-FADUNSIN SHOLA DAVID

FPV 2017 7



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By

OLA-FADUNSIN SHOLA DAVID

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2017

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to God Almighty for the life and health he gave me to pursue this degree, to my lovely family: my wife (Mrs Ola-Fadunsin Olufunmilayo Josephine), my children (Mishael, Michael and Esther), my ever supportive parents (Engr. Lt. Col. (rtd) and Mrs T. O. Ola-Fadunsin) and also my wonderful siblings (Mrs Seyi Nwankwo, Engr. Segun Ola-Fadunsin, Dr. (Mrs) Ibukun Eboji and Mr Solomon Ola-Fadunsin).



Abstract of the thesis presented to the senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

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February 2017

Chairman : Reuben Sharma, DVM, MVSc, PhD, MRSB, CBiol.
Faculty : Veterinary Medicine

Bovine haemoparasites are cosmopolitan in distribution, mainly due to the global nature of the cattle livestock industry, and the abundance and widespread dispersal of their arthropod vectors. These haemopathogens are known to cause substantial economic losses to the cattle industry due to decreased productivity and high mortality rates. In spite of their importance, there remains a dearth of information on the epidemiology of haemoparasitic diseases in many parts of the world. The present study therefore aimed to determine the diversity and epidemiology (prevalence, spatial distribution, occurrence of co-infection and risk factors) of bovine haemoparasites in Peninsular Malaysia, and the diversity, spatial distribution, and temporal dynamics of potential arthropods vectors. Blood samples were collected from 1,045 heads of beef and dairy cattle on 43 farms from six geographical zones in Peninsular Malaysia, and subjected to PCR amplification of species-specific genetic fragments for the detection of the various haemoparasites. Molecular detection revealed the presence of these haemoparasites and their prevalence; *Anaplasma marginale* (72.6%), *Theileria orientalis* (49.8%), "*Candidatus Mycoplasma haemobos*" (47.0%), *Babesia bovis* (32.5%), *Babesia bigemina* (30.5%), and *Trypanosoma evansi* (17.9%). There was no distinct pattern of haemoparasites spatial distribution in the country. The six haemoparasites were present in all the sampled farms except one where infection with *T. orientalis* and *T. evansi* were not detected. There was no consistent pattern in the prevalence of cattle haemoparasites according to various epidemiological factors. Our study showed that 92.1% of the total cattle sampled were infected with either one or more species of haemoparasites. Triple haemoparasite species co-infection was the most common. Using multivariable logistic regression, cattle breed and age were identified as the most common risk factors for haemoparasites infection among the cattle. To determine the diversity and spatial distribution of potential arthropod vectors, haematophagous flies were trapped in 25 of the sampled farms and ticks were collected from 15 farms. Three types of traps (Nzi, Malaise and Intercept) were deployed on the farms, and flies belonging to seven genera and 36 species [*Musca* (17

species), *Stomoxys* (6 species), *Tabanus* (6 species), *Chrysops* (4 species), and a species each of *Haematopota*, *Haematobia* and *Haematobosca*] were trapped. Two species of ticks *Rhipicephalus microplus* and *Haemaphysalis bispinosa* were found to parasitize the cattle. To determine the temporal activity patterns of haematophagous diptera on cattle farms and the efficacy of various trapping methods, two each of the Nzi, Malaise and Intercept traps were set in two selected cattle farms (dairy and beef) over a period of one year, accumulating to 216 trap-days. Five genera of flies from 27 species were caught in both farms. The highest abundance was recorded for *Musca crassirostris* (62.4%), followed by *Stomoxys indicus* (15.6%), *M. inferior* (12.8%), *S. calcitrans* (4.2%), *M. sorbens* (1.0%), *M. ventrosa* (0.8%), *S. sistens* (0.8%), *M. bakeri* (0.8%), *M. conducens* (0.6%), *M. asiatica* (0.2%) and *T. minimus* (0.2%). The other species were caught in small numbers. Diurnal activity of the flies followed variable patterns, but peak activity was common in the late evenings (1900hrs). The Nzi trap proved to be the most efficient in trapping a higher diversity and number of haematophagous flies. There was no significant correlation between climatic variables (rainfall and temperature), and the abundance of diptera on the cattle farms. This present study constituted the first attempt in the country to document the molecular epidemiology and risk factors of bovine haemoparasites, and the diversity and dynamics of their potential arthropod vectors. It is envisaged that the data obtained will afford a clearer understanding of the epidemiology of bovine haemoparasitic diseases in Peninsular Malaysia. This in turn could be used to formulate effective treatment, control and prevention measures to assist in improving the health of local cattle in the country.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KEPELBAGAIAN DAN EPIDEMIOLOGI HEMOPARASIT DALAM
LEMBU DAN POTENSI VEKTOR ARTROPOD DI SEMENANJUNG
MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Parasit darah dalam lembu adalah meluas dalam penyebarannya, terutama disebabkan oleh sifat global industri lembu ternakan, dan kelimpahan dan penyebaran meluas vektor artropod mereka. Parasit patogen darah ini diketahui menyebabkan kerugian ekonomi yang besar kepada industri lembu kerana produktiviti menurun dan kadar kematian yang tinggi. Walaubagaimanapun kepentingannya, masih terdapat kekurangan maklumat mengenai epidemiologi penyakit hemoparasit di banyak tempat di dunia. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan kepelbagaian dan epidemiologi molekul (kelaziman, pengagihan tempat, berlakunya jangkitan bersama dan faktor risiko) hemoparasit dalam lembu di Semenanjung Malaysia, dan kepelbagaian, taburan, dan dinamik sementara bagi potensi vektor artropod. Sampel darah telah dikumpul daripada 1,045 ekor lembu daging dan lembu tenusu di 43 ladang dari enam zon geografi di Semenanjung Malaysia, saunpet birtakluk kepada PCR penggandaan spesies khusus serpihan genetik untuk mengesan pelbagai parasit darah. Pengesanan molekul mendedahkan kehadiran parasit darah ini dan kedar mereka; *Anaplasma marginale* (72.6%), *Theileria orientalis* (49.8%), "*Candidatus Mycoplasma haemobos*" (47.0%), *Babesia bovis* (32.5%), *Babesia bigemina* (30.5%), dan *Trypanosoma evansi* (17.9%). Tidak ada corak yang ketara pada pengagihan tempat parasit darah di negara ini. Enam hemoparasit hadir di semua ladang yang disampel kecuali salah satu di mana jangkitan *T. orientalis* dan *T. evansi* tidak dikesan. Tiada corak konsisten dalam corak hemoparasit lembu mengikut pelbagai faktor epidemiologi. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa 92.1% daripada jumlah lembu yang diuji dijangkiti dagin sama ada satu atau lebih hemoparasit. Jangkitan bersama tiga spesies hemoparasit adalah paling biasa. Menggunakan regresi pembolehubah logistik, baka lembu dan umur telah dikenal pasti sebagai faktor risiko yang paling biasa untuk jangkitan hemoparasit antara lembu. Untuk menentukan kepelbagaian dan taburan spatial untuk potensi vektor artropod, lalat penghisap darah diperangkap dalam 25 ladang dan sengkenit dikumpulkan dari padc 15 ladang. Tiga jenis perangkap (Nzi, Malaise dan Intercept) telah ditempatkan di ladang-ladang, dan lalat dari tujuh genus

dan 36 spesies [*Musca* (17 spesies), *Stomoxys* (6 spesies), *Tabanus* (6 spesies), *Chrysops* (4 spesies), dan satu spesies bagi setiap *Haematopota*, *Haematobia* dan *Haematobosca*] telah terperangkap. Dua spesies sengkent *Rhipicephalus microplus* dan *Haemaphysalis bispinosa* didapati mengerumuni lembu. Untuk menentukan corak sementara aktiviti Diptera penghisap darah di ladang lembu dan keberkesanan pelbagai kaedah memerangkap, dua bagi setiap Nzi, Malaise dan Intercept perangkap telah ditetapkan dalam dua ladang lembu yang dipilih (tenusu dan daging) dalam tempoh satu tahun, terkumpul sehingga 216 perangkap-hari. Lima genera lalat dari 27 spesies telah diperangkap dalam kedua-dua ladang. Kadar tertinggi dicatatkan untuk *Musca crassirostris* (62.4%), diikuti oleh *Stomoxys indicus* (15.6%), *M. rendah* (12.8%), *S. calcitrans* (4.2%), *M. sorbens* (1.0%), *M. Ventrosa* (0.8%), *S. sistens* (0.8%), *M. Bakeri* (0.8%), *M. conducens* (0.6%), *M. asiatica* (0.2%) dan *T. minimus* (0.2%). Spesies lain telah diperangkap dalam bilangan yang kecil. Corak ktiviti diurnal lalat ikuti berubah-ubah, tetapi aktiviti puncak adalah biasa pada waktu lewat petang (1900hrs). Perangkap Nzi terbukti menjadi yang paling berkesan dalam memerangkap daging kepelbagaian dan bilangan lalat penghisap darah yang lebih tinggi. Terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara pembolehubah iklim (hujan dan suhu), dan kelimpahan Diptera di ladang-ladang lembu. Kajian ini merupakan percubaan pertama di negara ini untuk mendokumentasikan epidemiologi molekul dan faktor-faktor risiko hemoparasit lembu, dan kepelbagaian dan kedinamik potensi vektor artropod mereka. Adalah dijangkakan bahawa data yang diperolehi akan mampu memberi pemahaman yang lebih jelas mengenai epidemiologi penyakit hemoparasit lembu di Semenanjung Malaysia. Seterusnya boleh digunakan untuk merangka rawatan, kawalan dan pencegahan langkah yang berkesan untuk membantu meningkatkan kesihatan ternakan tempatan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I will like to give all the glory, praise, honour and adoration to the Almighty God for His grace, favour and mercies without which this work would not have started and be completed. My profound gratitude and appreciation goes to my chairman supervisory committee, Dr. Reuben Sharma for his invaluable guidance, patience, motivation, immense knowledge, continuous support and encouragement throughout the course of my PhD study. With heart full of gratitude, I will like to appreciate my co-supervisors, Associate Prof. Dr. Faez Jesse Firdaus Abdullah and Prof Dr. Rehana Abdullah Sani for their advice, encouragement, guidance and supervision during my study.

Many thanks goes to Dr. Sule Waidi Folorunsho for initiating the whole Malaysia success story and Dr. Farouk Bande for his support and assistance during my time of seeking admission for this study and during the study. Special appreciation to my fellow lab mates: Collin, Anna, Priya, Dr. Gimba, Dr. Konto, Dr. Donea, Mrs. Aida, Dr. Vish, Shahir, Ruvi, Zarith, Dila and Dilaila for the acceptance, support, times of working into the night and the great friendship we have established. My profound gratitude goes to the staff of Parasitology Laboratory, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, UPM, Mrs. Maizatul Akmal, Mr. Rashid Abdul Rahman and Mrs. Amlizawaty Amzah for their ready assistance and creating an enabling environment to carry out my research. I am greatly indebted to my father and friend, Mr. John Jeffery who played a great role in the identification of the flies and ticks collected during this work. My sincere gratitude to Dr. Chandrawathani Panchadcharam for every technical assistance to make this research a success. A well-deserved appreciation to Dr. Aroop Mukherjee for guiding and helping with the statistics in this thesis, I am very grateful boss. Special thanks to all the government and private farms that allowed me to obtain samples from their animals.

My sincere appreciation to my Pastors: Pastor and Pastor (Mrs.) Seyi Omisore, my friends: Dr. Tanko, Mr. Ibitoye, Dr. Ibitoye, Mr. Donatus, to mention but a few who made my stay in Malaysia wonderful.

My unreserved appreciation to my parents, Engr. Lt. Col. (rtd) and Mrs. T. O. Ola-Fadunsin for their financial, moral and spiritual support all through the period of this degree, to my wonderful siblings, Engr. and Mrs. Ngozi Nwangwo, Engr. and Mrs. Segun Ola-Fadunsin, Prince and Dr. (Mrs) Lawrence Eboji and Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Ola-Fadunsin for their sacrifices and all round support to see me finish well. To my parents, Engr. and Mrs. I. A. Adeleke, thanks a lot for believing in me to have given me the best gift on earth. My lovely and unending appreciation and thanks goes to my jewel of inestimable value, my wife, Mrs. Ola-Fadunsin Olufunmilayo Josephine for her unconditional love, patience, sacrifices, understanding, moral support, prayers and holding the home-front throughout the study. Similar appreciation goes to my great and wonderful children, Ola-Fadunsin Mishael Oluwatoyin, Ola-Fadunsin Michael Oluwamayowa and Ola-Fadunsin Esther Oluwapelumi for their endurance and prayers during this study.

Finally, I appreciate all my brethren (Pastors, Ministers and Members) of The Redeemed Christian Church of God Malaysia Province 1 and very one too numerous to mention that has made this study a success.

May the Almighty God bless you all.



I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 8 February 2017 to conduct the final examination of Ola-Fadunsin Shola David on his thesis entitled "Diversity and Epidemiology of Bovine Haemoparasites and their Potential Arthropod Vectors in Peninsular Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

%	Percent
µl	Microliters
1×	one times
10×	ten times
16SrRNA	16S ribosomal RNA
2×	Two times
A	Alanine
a	Adenosine
AFLP	Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphism
AMA-1	Apical Membrane Antigen- 1
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
bp	base pair
C	Cysteine
ddH ₂ O	double distilled water
DK	Dengkil
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTP	deoxynucleotide triphosphate
DVS	Department of Veterinary Services
E	East
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
ELISA	Enzyme linked Immunosorbent Assay
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G	Gauge
G	Guanine
g	Gram
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global positioning system

h	Hour
kb	Kilobase
KK	Kedah-Kelantan
km	Kilometer
LID	Local Indian Dairy
LSD	Least Significant Difference
M	Molar
m	Metre
mg	Milligram
MgCl ₂	magnesium chloride
min	Minute
ml	Milliliters
mM	Millimolar
mm	Millimeters
MPSP	Major Piroplasm Surface Protein
MSP4	Major Surface Protein-4
N	North
N	Number
NCBI	National Center for Biotechnology Information
°C	degree Celsius
OIE	World Organization for Animal Health
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
rbc	red blood cells
RNA	ribonucleic acid
RoTat 1.2	Rode Trypanozoon Antigen Type 1.2
sec	Seconds
spp	Species
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
T	Thymine

TAE	tris-acetic-EDTA
UV	Ultraviolet
V	Voltage
VESA 1 α	Variant Erythrocyte Surface Antigen 1
W	Watt



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Parasitism is a major cause of economic losses in many cattle producing countries of the world. Heavy parasite burdens are known to cause mortality, reduction in weight gain, low fertility, and sub-optimal production in ruminants (Perry and Randolph, 1999; Sissay *et al.*, 2007; Alembrihan and Haylegebriel, 2013). Ruminants are susceptible to a large number of parasites represented by the major classes of helminths, arthropods and protozoa (Hunter-Cevera and Belt, 1996). Among the various economically important bovine diseases, vector-borne haemoparasite infections such as anaplasmosis, babesiosis, trypanosomiasis, theileriosis and mycoplasmosis are recognized as a major cause of severe clinical illnesses in cattle (Haque *et al.*, 2012; Singh *et al.*, 2012). These parasites threaten an estimated 250 million cattle and act as a major constraint on livestock production and improvement in many developing countries (Durrani and Kamal, 2008; Singh *et al.*, 2012; Huseyin *et al.*, 2013). The estimated annual global costs associated with arthropod and arthropod-borne diseases in cattle is between US\$ 13.9 to 18.7 billion (de Castro, 1997). Haemoparasite infections may be silent and only evident when the host is undergoing a clinical response to infection. While low-grade parasitaemia may be readily observed in blood smears from apparently healthy animals, heavy infection may inflict losses to the cattle industry due to the increase in mortality, reduced growth rate and production, lowered working efficiency and abortions (Levine, 1985; Kamio *et al.*, 1990; Fadruga *et al.*, 1991; Sajid *et al.*, 2007; Yitayew and Samuel 2015).

In Malaysia, ruminant livestock farming is an important component of its agricultural sector. The Malaysian government, in its effort to be self-sufficient in beef production, has embarked on various strategies to promote economic livestock production. The cattle population in the entire country as of 2011 was estimated to be a little below one million heads, with the vast majority of the cattle farms concentrated in Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) (DVS, 2011). Over three decades ago, the Department of Veterinary Services Malaysia (DVS, 1986) stressed the importance of disease surveillance and identified blood parasite infections as a major parasitic condition affecting cattle in the country. The spread of these organisms are often difficult to control as they are effectively transmitted by biting arthropods, which are abundant in the tropical climate of Malaysia which favour its survival and multiplication throughout the year (Saharee and Fatimah, 1993).

Amin-Babjee (1978), Sani *et al.* (1995), Sharifat (2001) and Chin (2007) documented that anaplasmosis, babesiosis, mycoplasmosis, theileriosis and trypanosomiasis are the major haemoparasitic diseases that affect cattle in Malaysia. These diseases are known to cause substantial losses to the cattle industry in the country (Hassan, 1977). Monitoring of a local cattle farm over a seven year duration revealed a death rate of 66% due to haemoparasite infections (Amin-Babjee, 1993). A recent study (Premaalatha *et al.*, 2013) on the seroprevalence of *Anaplasma marginale* in Malaysia recorded a high prevalence rate of 78.5%. Rahman *et al.* (2010) employed an Indirect Immunofluorescent Antibody assay (IFAT) to determine the prevalence of bovine

babesiosis and documented prevalence rates of 17.0% for *Babesia bovis*, 16.0% for *B. bigemina* and 9.0% for both *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina*. A subsequent seroprevalence study (Rahman *et al.*, 2012) on *Trypanosoma evansi* and *A. marginale* recorded prevalence rates of 14.7% and 77.6%, respectively. Earlier work by Hassan (1977) on cattle and buffaloes in Peninsular Malaysia recorded that the most common blood parasites in these livestock were *Babesia* and *A. marginale*. Kamio *et al.* (1990) screened blood samples of 322 cattle in seven states of Peninsular Malaysia and made an interesting observation that all the cattle harboured *Theileria*. With the present body of evidence, it is apparent that bovine haemoparasites are prevalent in the country and could pose a substantial risk to profitable livestock production. However, it is often the case that most silent infections go undetected by conventional microscopy, and serological data only reveals that the animals were exposed to the parasites but does not readily provide information on active infection. Low grade parasitaemia, in the absence of clinical disease, is of concern as this could lead to gradual but significant loss in productivity. Apart from a single study on the molecular prevalence of *Anaplasma* (Tay *et al.*, 2014) among cattle in one location in the country, there remains a paucity of information on the molecular prevalence of local bovine haemoparasites. It is therefore timely that a molecular study be conducted to detect these haemoparasites infecting cattle in the country, and to determine the diversity of their potential arthropod vectors.

Biting flies have been known to be efficient mechanical vector for several pathogens like *Anaplasma* and *Trypanosoma*, and have a direct influence on the epidemiology of vector-borne diseases (Torr *et al.*, 2006 and Martins *et al.*, 2008). They also cause nuisance and restlessness to livestock and inflict severe bites that cause blood loss, and may result in reduced weight gain and sub-optimal milk production (Taylor *et al.*, 2012). In Malaysia, biting flies such as *Stomoxys*, *Haematopota*, *Chrysops* and *Tabanus* have been implicated as vectors of bovine anaplasmosis and bovine trypanosomiasis (Surra) (Nurulaini *et al.*, 2007; Rahman *et al.*, 2012). Ticks are cosmopolitan in distribution and are capable of transmitting a wide range of pathogens including viruses, bacteria and protozoa, highlighting their importance as vectors of disease for livestock (Ryan, 2006). Tick-borne parasitic diseases occur throughout the world, especially in tropical and subtropical areas (Monique and Henri, 2002). These arthropods have been implicated to cause major losses to the cattle industry as a result of disease transmission, damage to the skin through their attachment, restlessness and the nuisance caused (Jongejan and Uilenberg, 1994). In Malaysia, cattle ticks have been incriminated as vectors for a variety of bovine diseases, including theileriosis, babesiosis and anaplasmosis (Kamio *et al.*, 1990; Rahman *et al.*, 2010; Rahman *et al.*, 2012).

In spite of the major concern and economic drawbacks caused by bovine haemoparasites, there remains a dearth of current published information on the prevalence and zoogeographical distribution of these pathogens and their arthropod vectors in Malaysia. In addition, more advanced molecular diagnostic techniques have not been employed to determine the presence of these haemopathogens locally. It has been well established that molecular detection techniques like the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and subsequent DNA sequencing of target genes are highly effective means of detecting and genotyping blood parasites (Zahler *et al.*, 2000; Dantrakool *et*

al., 2004). The present study was therefore undertaken to investigate the molecular epidemiology of bovine haemoparasites in Peninsular Malaysia, and to determine the diversity and spatio-temporal distribution of their known and potential vectors. It constitutes the first comprehensive attempt to employ molecular techniques to determine the prevalence and epidemiology of these bovine pathogens over a widespread area of the country, and the first systematic investigation on the occurrence and diversity of biting fly vectors that may be responsible for transmission. It is envisaged that the data obtained will afford a more accurate representation of local bovine haemoparasite-vector occurrence, which in turn may facilitate targeted control and prevention measures to be instituted. The present study was undertaken with the following hypotheses and specific objectives:

Hypothesis

1. Bovine haemoparasites (*Anaplasma*, *Babesia*, *Mycoplasma*, *Theileria* and *Trypanosoma*) are present in Peninsular Malaysia with no defined pattern of distribution.
2. Numerous risk factors at the farm and animal levels are associated with bovine haemoparasite infection in Peninsular Malaysia.
3. The dynamics of arthropod vectors of these parasites may be influenced by environmental variables.
4. Various trapping methods will have different level of efficacy in the collection of biting flies that may be vectors of these haemoparasites.

Objectives

1. To determine the diversity, prevalence, spatial distribution, and occurrence of co-infection of bovine haemoparasites in Peninsular Malaysia by PCR detection.
2. To ascertain the risk factors for infection with these haemoparasites among local cattle at the farm and animal levels.
3. To investigate the species diversity and spatial distribution patterns of haematophagous arthropods that may be potential vectors for bovine haemoparasites in the country.
4. To determine the seasonal dynamics and temporal activity patterns of haematophagous diptera, and the efficacy of various trapping methods on selected cattle farms in the country.

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