NEW RECORD OF PHLEBOTOMUS SERGENTI, THE VECTOR OF LEISHMANIA TROPICA, IN THE SOUTHERN NILE VALLEY OF EGYPT

HANAFI A. HANAFI,1 GREGORY M. BEAVERS,2* and ELIZABETH A. DUKSTRA1

ABSTRACT. We report the 1st collection of Phlebotomus sergenti, a vector of the cutaneous and visceralizing forms of Leishmania tropica, from southern Egypt. Four female and 1 male P. sergenti were collected from unlit Centers for Disease Control light traps placed in a village on the Nile River, 6 km north of Aswan, Egypt, during studies conducted from 1998 to 1999. This extends the known distribution of this species farther south in Egypt than previously recorded.

KEY WORDS Phlebotomus sergenti, distribution, Phlebotominae, Egypt

Phlebotomus sergenti (Parrot) is a widely distributed sand fly species that feeds readily on humans and is a known vector of Leishmania tropica (Ashford and Bettini 1987, Al-Zahrani et al. 1988). Phlebotomus sergenti occurs throughout the coastal region of the Mediterranean Basin and continues east from Israel to northern India and south through the Arabian and Indian Peninsulas (Lewis 1982). In Egypt, P. sergenti has been reported from Cairo north through the Nile Delta region, and eastward through the Sinai Peninsula (El Sawaf et al. 1987, Morsy et al. 1990) (Fig. 1). This species has never been reported south of Cairo.

Leishmania tropica is the causative agent of anthroponotic, or urban, cutaneous leishmaniasis (CL), which usually causes a dry lesion. This form of CL is found primarily in densely populated areas where human–sand fly–human transmission is maintained by P. sergenti (WHO 1990). However, L. tropica is also reported to cause visceral infection (Magill et al. 1992, 1993; Hyams et al. 1995), as well as classic kala-azar (Sacks et al. 1986). Aswan City and has historically had high populations of several sand fly species compared to other villages in that region (Hanafi, unpublished data).

Sand flies were collected with battery-operated, unlit Centers for Disease Control-style traps baited with either dry ice or a combination of dry ice and low or high concentrations of octenol. Traps were set out during the late afternoon in and around animal sheds and houses and were retrieved early the next day. During this same trip, specimens of Phlebotomus papatasi (Scopoli), Sergentomyia palestinensis (Adler & Theodor) and S. schwetzi (Adler & Theodor & Parrot) also were collected.

Specimens were stored in vials containing 75% ethanol until mounted for identification. Sand flies were individually mounted on microslides in Puri's medium (Kirk and Lewis 1951) and identified to species level with the key developed by Lane (1986). Four female and 1 male P. sergenti were collected on 4 different nights over a period of 6 consecutive calendar days. Species confirmation was made at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), Silver Spring, MD. Voucher specimens have been deposited in the collection at the Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3, Cairo, Egypt.

This is the 1st evidence that P. sergenti is present in the southern Nile River valley of Egypt. Aswan is located approximately 960 km south of Cairo and is separated from the rest of Southwest Asia by the Red Sea and the Eastern Desert of Egypt. The climate of southern Egypt is much hotter and drier than that found along the Mediterranean Coast and in the Cairo area (El Saïd et al. 1985, Lane 1986). The presence of P. sergenti in this region is significant. A tremendous number of foreign tourists visit southern Egypt, as well as Egyptians who work in countries in the Arabian Peninsula and travel between Egypt and these countries where L. tropica is endemic. These travelers increase the risk of introducing L. tropica, including its visceralizing form, into Egypt. An example of this potential occurred when an Egyptian laborer, recently returned

* Present address: Navy Disease Vector Ecology and Control Center, Naval Air Station, Box 43, Jacksonville, FL 32212.

† Vector Biology Research Program, U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3, PSC 452, Box 5000, FPO, AE 09835.
New Record of Phlebotomus Sergenti, the Vector of Leishmania Tropica, in the Southern Nile Valley of Egypt

We report the 1st collection of Phlebotomus sergenti, a vector of the cutaneous and visceralizing forms of Leishmania tropica, from southern Egypt. Four female and I male P. sergenti were collected from unlit Centers for Disease Control light traps placed in a village on the Nile River, 6 km north of Aswan, Egypt during studies conducted from 1998 to 1999. This extends the known distribution of this species farther south in Egypt than previously recorded.
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