**Full Article**

**Determination the frequency of Ixodid ticks on the sheep in Khorasan Razavi province, Iran**

Razmi*, G.R., Najarnejad^2, V., Rashtibaf^3, M.

1. Department of Pathobiology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

2. Provincial Veterinary Service of Razavi Khorasan, Mashhad, Iran

Received 20 Jun 2011; accepted 10 Sep 2011

**ABSTRACT**

A survey was carried out to investigate the frequency of hard tick species (Acari: Ixodidae) on sheep in Khorasan Razavi province. A total of 812 ticks were collected from the sheep of different areas of Khorsan Razavi province five species were identified as follow: *Rhipicephalus turanicus* (59.23%), *Hyalomma marginatum turanicum* (25.73%), *Hyalomma excavatum* (14.8%), *Hyalomma anatolicum* (8.3%), and *Dermacentor nivens* (4.8%). The frequency of tick infestation in southern parts was greater than northern parts of the province. *R. turanicuss* and *H. m. turanicum* were dominant ticks in the province.

**Keywords:** Ixodid tick, sheep, Khorasan Razavi province

**INTRODUCTION**

Ticks are blood sucking arthropods belong to the class arachnids. Once they attach to a host for a blood meal, they cause irritation and infection of the skin and anemia. Ticks are one of the major vectors that transmit important pathogens such as CCHF virus, *Babesia* spp, *Theileria* spp and *Anaplasma* spp to man and animal around the world (Morel 1989, Soulsby 1982). Knowing the prevalence of the tick species, which are involved in transmission of the diseases, and their geographical distributions, are important issues to control the tick and tick-borne diseases. Khorasan Razavi province is economically impressed by an agricultural and animal husbandry, including sheep breeding. So far, several studies have been done were done about tick fauna in different areas of Iran (Abbasion 1961, Mazlum 1971, Rahbari 1995, Razavi & Saifi 2006, Nabian et al 2007), but, little information is available about the frequency of ixodid tick species on sheep of Khorasan Razavi province. The aim of this study was to determine the frequency of tick infestation on the sheep.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Field study area.** Khorasan Razavi province is located in N 35° 6′ 7.2911″ latitude and E
59° 6' 15.0329" longitude and has an area of more than 127000 square kilometers (Figure 1). Khorasan Razavi province (Figure 1). After collecting, tick samples were separately stored in 70% ethanol and labeled with the date and the name of the field until the species determination. First, the male and female ticks were diagnosed based on the ratio the size of scutum to the dorsal surface. Then, ticks species were identified under a stereo-microscope, according to general identification keys (Hoogstraal 1956, Walker et al 2003, Estrada- Pena et al 2004, Apanaskevich & Horak 2005, 2008).

RESULTS

A total of 812 ticks (215 male and 556 female) were collected from the sheep of different areas of Khorsan. The results of this study revealed that the tick fauna of the sheep was comprised of 5 species in Khorasan Razavi Province. The frequencies of male and female ticks are presented for each species. (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tick species</th>
<th>No of Male tick</th>
<th>No of Female tick</th>
<th>Total No of ticks</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R. turanicus</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>59.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.m.turanicum</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>25.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.excavatum</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.anatolicum</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. niveus</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent tick species in Razavi Khorasan province were R. turanicus and H. m turanicum (Table 1). D.niveus was found in Northern part of province (Table 2).
Some studies have been shown that H. turanicus is the abundant tick in sheep and goats of Khorasan Province (Razmi et al. 2003, 2004). H. excavatum and H. anatolicum had low frequencies among collected ticks of Khorasan Razavi Province. These ticks are adapted to the Mediterranean and steppe climates of North, Africa and to steppe and desert climates elsewhere. The distribution of H. anatolicum and H. excavatum is overlapped in some areas. Cattle, sheep, goats, camels, horses and donkeys are the hosts of two species. Both H. excavatum and H. anatolicum have been reported all over of Iran (Rahbari et al. 2007, Nabian et al. 2009). Although the ability of H. excavatum to act as vector of pathogens such as Theileria spp. is uncertain (Estrada- Pena et al. 2004), but, Razmi et al. (2003 b) showed that the H. excavatum was the dominant tick on the cattle in Khorasan province and acts as vector of tropical theileriosis. H. anatolicum also was reported from the cattle, the sheep and the goats of Khorasan province and is an important vector of Th. annulata and Th. lestoquardi in Iran (Razmi et al. 2003a, b, c).

D. niveus found with very low frequency among collected tick in the current study species. D. niveus is distributed in semi desert and steppe zones from the western Mediterranean area to southern Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan. Adults of this study parasitize all the kinds of domestic herbivores, often camels, and wild sheep, goats, deer, pigs, and wolves. Immature feed on rodents, hedgehogs, and hares (Hoogstraal & Valdez 1980, Filippova et al. 1983). D. niveus have been reported form domestic sheep and goat in Khorasan province (Mazlum 1971, Nabian et al. 2008b). D. niveus is known as a vector of CCHF (Yashina et al. 2003). Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that R. turanicus and H. m. turanicum are dominant tick species in sheep of Khorasan Razavi provinces and should be done more studies about role of these species in transmission of blood parasites.

Acknowledgment

We are very grateful to Mr. Hamid Eshrati for his technical assistance. The author would like to

### Table 2. The prevalence of different species of Ixodid ticks in southern and northern parts of Khorasan Razavi province.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tick species</th>
<th>Southern part</th>
<th>Northern part</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No of tick (%)</td>
<td>No of tick (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. turanicus</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. m. turanicum</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. excavatum</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha. anatolicum</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. niveus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DISCUSSION

In this study, R. turanicus had the highest frequency among collected tick species in northern and southern of Khorasan Razavi province. R. turanicus is a tick of savanna, steppe, desert and Mediterranean climatic regions. It occurs in southern Europe, northern Africa, and the mountainous area such as Khorasan province, Iran (Rahbari et al. 2007). Some studies have been shown that R. turanicus could be as the vector of B. ovis (Friedhoff, 1997; Hafez et al. 1982; Shayan et al. 2007).

H. m.turanicum had also high frequency in this study. This tick is known as pale legged Hyalomma. It is originated from the Middle East. Adult ticks feed on cattle, sheep, goats, and large wild herbivores. H. m. turanicum is not known to be a main vector pathogen disease to domestic animals, it is considered as a vector of the virus causing Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever in human (Estrada- Pena et al. 2004).

H. m. turanicum has been recorded from cattle, sheep, horse and camel in many parts of Iran (Mazlum, 1971). Some studies have been shown that H. marginatum is...
acknowledge to the Razavi Veterinary offices for providing information about sheep flocks and logistic support.

References


Hoogstraal, H. (1956). *African Ixodoidea*. Vol 1 Ticks of the Sudan, Naval Medical Research; USA


