

Amblyomma hebraeum* is a vector of *Rickettsia africae* and not *R. conorii

The letter by Musuka *et al.*⁵ on the distribution of *Amblyomma hebraeum* in the sandveld region of Botswana refers to a book chapter in which it is stated that *Amblyomma hebraeum* is one of the known vectors of *Rickettsia conorii*. We now know that this is incorrect^{1,3}, and the current situation is as follows:

Three spotted fever group rickettsias are known to occur in southern Africa. *R. conorii* is found in the dog ticks *Rhipicephalus simus* and *Haemaphysalis leachii* and is the agent of Mediterranean spotted fever in people^{1,3}. This disease has a mortality rate of up to 5% and is associated with an eschar at the site of tick attachment, fever, headache and rash. The organism does not cause clinical disease in dogs although animals are

rickettsaemic for short periods after experimental infection².

R. africae is found in *A. hebraeum* and *A. variegatum* and is the agent of African tick bite fever³. As immature *Amblyomma* readily feed on people, African tick bite fever is very common in rural Africa and is associated with multiple eschars. The disease is far milder than Mediterranean spotted fever and is very rarely, if ever, fatal. *R. africae* does not cause clinical disease in domestic ruminants, although they may be rickettsaemic for up to 1 month after experimental infection⁴.

R. aeschlimanii has been found in *Hyalomma marginatum rufipes* but the pathogenicity of this organism in domestic animals and people has yet to be determined^{1,3}.

References

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