

RESEARCH NOTE

The Epidemiological Importance of *Triatoma nigromaculata* (Stal, 1859) Colonizing Human Dwellings of the Venezuelan Andes

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The search for intradomiciliary vectors of Chagas' disease in Venezuela has been limited to regions below 800 m altitude, where *Rhodnius prolixus* predominates and is the principal vector (Pifano 1961 *Arch Venez Med Trop Parasit Med* 4: 140-144). It well may be that other proven domiciliary vectors, such as *T. nigromaculata*

(Stal, 1859) might be found in human dwellings above 800 m altitude, without the knowledge of the inhabitants.

T. nigromaculata, naturally infected with *Trypanosoma cruzi* was found in two rural dwellings at 800 m altitude in the Coastal Cordillera of north central Venezuela (Lent & Pifano 1939 *Bras Med* 33: 685-686), recently, in the locality of Guaraque (8° 30' and 71° 35' W), at an altitude of 1,120 m in the Venezuelan Andes, we found a colony of *T. nigromaculata* in a recently constructed modern dwelling, with plastered and painted walls and a solid tiled roof. In this house, inhabited by five persons, two dogs and a cat, we captured 59 bugs in bedrooms and in the nest of a setting hen, of which bugs 47 had ingested blood. No bug was infected with *T. cruzi*.

The blood ingested by the bugs was tested by immunodiffusion technique against rabbit antiserum against man, dog, cat and chicken (Guerrero & Scorza 1981 *Bol Dir Malar San Amb* 21: 129-139). The results are given in the Table.

We emphasize two findings, first, the intradomiciliary colonization of *T. nigromaculata* in the Andean region, and second, the alimentary preference for human or dog blood in 83% of the insects containing blood.

The finding of *T. nigromaculata* in a modern dwelling in the Venezuelan Andes, and the recent increase of tourism in the area, leading to the construction of modern dwellings above 1,000 m altitude, shows the necessity of vigilance for the control of possible new foci of Chagas' disease.

TABLE

Age composition and blood source frequencies in intradomiciliary *Triatoma nigromaculata*

Development stage	Total	Percentages in the sample	Blood source				
			Man	Dog	Cat	Chicken	Rat
Adult male	3	5	3	0	0	0	0
Adult female	6	10	4	1	0	1	0
Nymph - V	17	29	8	6 (2)	0	0	0
Nymph - IV	14	24	4	5	0	3	0
Nymph - III	12	20	4	2	0	4	0
Nymph - II	7	12	2	0	0	0	0
Total	59	100	25	14	0	8	0
Subtotal percentages = 80			53	30	0	17	0

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