SPECIES DIVERSITY OF MESOSTIGMATID MITES FROM SMALL RODENTS IN SUBURBAN HABITATS

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Small rodents are common hosts of ectoparasites and play an important role in the maintenance of parasite communities. Mites of the suborder Mesostigmata parasitizing small rodents represent a diverse group widely distributed across different environments. Rodent-associated mites are of ecological interest and may serve as potential vectors or reservoirs of microorganisms that cause disease in humans and animals. However, the species diversity of mesostigmatid mites parasitizing small rodents and their distribution in suburban habitats remains poorly documented. The aim of this study was to investigate infestation patterns of small rodent species with parasitic Laelapidae mites across suburban environments in Lithuania. A total of 290 Mesostigmata mites were collected from small rodents captured at ten suburban sites in Lithuania in 2020. Mites were recorded from *Apodemus flavicollis, Apodemus agrarius, Myodes glareolus, Microtus arvalis, Microtus oeconomus* and *Micromys minutus*. Based on morphological characteristics, seven Mesostigmata mite species and one genus-level taxon were identified: *Laelaps agilis, Laelaps jettmari, Laelaps hilaris, Haemogamasus microti, Haemogamasus nidi, Eulaelaps stabularis, Androlaelaps glasgowi*, and *Hirstionyssus* sp. Abundance and mean intensity of mite infestation varied among rodent species and study sites. Mites were detected on 20.1% of the examined rodents, with the highest number collected from *A. flavicollis*. The most abundant mite species was *L. agilis*, represented by 191 individuals, occurring predominantly on *A. flavicollis*. This study contributes to a better understanding of Mesostigmata mite diversity in suburban habitats, providing a foundation for future research on host–parasite interactions and pathogen-related processes.