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The broad spectrum of *Trichinella* hosts: From cold- to warm-blooded animals

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Abstract

In recent years, studies on *Trichinella* have shown that the host range is wider than previously believed and new *Trichinella* species and genotypes have been described. Three classes of vertebrates are known to act as hosts, mammals, birds and reptiles, and infected vertebrates have been detected on all continents but Antarctica. Mammals represent the most important hosts and all *Trichinella* species are able to develop in this vertebrate class. Natural infections with *Trichinella* have been described in more than 150 mammalian species belonging to 12 orders (i.e., Marsupialia, Insectivora, Edentata, Chiroptera, Lagomorpha, Rodentia, Cetacea, Carnivora, Perissodactyla, Artiodactyla, Tylopoda and Primates). The epidemiology of the infection greatly varies by species relative to characteristics, such as diet, life span, distribution, behaviour, and relationships with humans. The non-encapsulated species *Trichinella pseudospiralis*, detected in both mammals (14 species) and birds (13 species), shows a cosmopolitan

distribution with three distinguishable populations in the Palearctic, Nearctic and Australian regions. Two additional non-encapsulated species, *Trichinella papuae*, detected in wild pigs and saltwater crocodiles of Papua New Guinea, and *Trichinella zimbabwensis*, detected in farmed Nile crocodiles of Zimbabwe, can complete their life cycle in both mammals and reptiles. To the best of our knowledge, *T. papuae* and *T. zimbabwensis* are the only two parasites known to complete their entire life cycle independently of whether the host is warm-blooded or cold-blooded. This suggests that these two *Trichinella* species are capable of activating different physiological mechanisms, according to the specific vertebrate class hosting them.

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Keywords

Trichinella; Mammals; Birds; Reptiles; Warm-blooded animals; Cold-blooded animals

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