

## ***Werneckiella equi* (Insecta: Phthiraptera, Ischnocera) – a rarely recorded parasite of horses**

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Chewing lice are common parasites of ungulates. Their transmission is relatively easy especially during direct contacts between host individuals. High density of hosts increases the chance for transmission; hence the high level of prevalence of infestation is common for animals under farming conditions. Moreover, there is relatively little data on the occurrence of chewing lice in horses.

This study was conducted between November 2004 and May 2005 and covered 14 horses (7 geldings, 6 mares, 1 foal) from a small stable in Tricity, Poland. *Werneckiella equi* (Phthiraptera, Ischnocera, Trichodectidae) were found in three horses. Mallophagosis symptoms, such as exfoliation of skin and alopecia, were observed in two horses (gelding and foal) – in places of the highest density of these parasites. In the third infected horse (mare) we found fewer lice.

The spread of chewing lice is affected by the frequency of contacts allowed between hosts. However, the horses under study spent a lot of time in common stables and a common paddock. Therefore, it is evident that the animal welfare – especially optimised diet, proper care, and individual immunity – plays an important role in preventing mallophagosis. This is probably why, despite the favourable conditions for transmission of chewing lice, the disease symptoms were observed in few horses only.