

Host-speciality and Morphological Variation in *Eptrimerus taraxaci* (Acarina: Eriophyoidea)

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Abstract

Eriophyid mites are phytophagous and generally have a narrow host range. They are restricted to a single genus and a species of a plant. It is the family Eriophyidae that has the greatest potential in weed control. One of the reasons why host plants are without experimental proof, the main indicator in species determination, is interspecific similarity in qualitative and morphometric characters within the genus *Eptrimerus*. In this paper, morphological (qualitative, discontinued quantitative and 17 morphometric) characters of *E. taraxaci* from Yugoslavia were analysed, and some of them compared with the original description (Finnish local population) and the description of the Polish local population. Differences between them in number of rays of featherclaw, number of tergites, length and width of the body, length of dorsal shield and so on, were found. Intraspecific variation in almost all analysed characters was very low (C.V. 9). Experiments done with five plant species, including a host plant, showed that *E. taraxaci* can reproduce only on host plant discs. It can survive to some extent on other plants (*Rumex crispus* - 6 days; *Capsicum annuum* - 7 days; *Plantago major* - 10 days; and *Phaseolus vulgaris* - 15 days). On *Taraxacum officinale* discs these species survived 17 days. During those 17 days, *E. taraxaci* produced three generations on *T. officinale* leaf discs under laboratory conditions.