

# Evaluation of Novaluron as a Feed-Through Insecticide for Control of Immature Sand Flies (Diptera: Psychodidae)

T. M. MASCARI,<sup>1,2</sup> M. A. MITCHELL,<sup>3</sup> E. D. ROWTON,<sup>4</sup> AND L. D. FOIL<sup>1</sup>

J. Med. Entomol. 44(4): 714–717 (2007)

**ABSTRACT** The development and survival of sand fly *Phlebotomus papatasi* Scopoli (Diptera: Psychodidae) larvae fed feces of Syrian hamsters, *Mesocricetus auratus*, that had been fed a diet containing novaluron were evaluated. In total, six larval diets were used in sand fly larval bioassays. Four groups of larvae were fed feces of hamsters that had been maintained on a diet containing either 0, 9.88, 98.8, or 988 ppm novaluron. Two additional groups were fed a larval diet composed of equal parts composted rabbit feces and rabbit chow containing either 0 or 988 ppm novaluron. No pupation, hence no adult emergence, occurred when larvae were fed feces of hamsters that were fed diets containing novaluron. The mortality of sand flies fed feces of treated hamsters occurred during larval molts. The results of this study suggest that a control strategy using rodent baits containing novaluron to control phlebotomine sand flies and zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis may be possible.

**KEY WORDS** *Phlebotomus papatasi*, novaluron, sand fly control

Phlebotomine sand flies (Diptera: Psychodidae) are the vectors of the protozoan parasites that cause leishmaniasis, and they are notorious pests of humans. Worldwide, there are an estimated 2 million new cases of leishmaniasis annually, and an estimated 12 million people are currently infected (WHO 2007). Throughout Asia and North Africa, the sand fly *Phlebotomus papatasi* Scopoli is the primary vector of *Leishmania major*, which is the causative agent of zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis (ZCL).

Semifossorial rodents serve as the primary reservoir hosts of ZCL in arid and semiarid Old World foci. In these ZCL foci, which have high diurnal temperatures and low relative humidity, populations of sand flies aggregate in the burrows of the rodent hosts of *L. major*. Sand fly larvae and adults thrive in the microclimate within the burrows where the abundant organic debris serves as the food source for sand fly larvae. In Old World ZCL foci, the larvae of *P. papatasi* frequently have been recovered from animal burrows (Artemiev et al. 1972, Morsy et al. 1993).

The only historical successes in suppressing the transmission of *L. major* have involved the destruction

of large areas of natural habitat to eliminate reservoirs and vector breeding and resting places (Faizulin 1980). The use of insecticides to control sand flies in Old World ZCL foci has not been successful because insecticide applications introduced into rodent burrows do not reach the microhabitats of adult and immature sand flies due to the length and complexity of the tunnels that make up the burrows (Seyedi-Rashti and Nadim 1973, Karapet'ian et al. 1983). The development of new, efficacious methods for the control of the vectors of ZCL is needed.

Phlebotomine sand fly larvae have been observed feeding on the feces of rodents (WHO 1968). Feed-through rodent baits that contain insecticides have been suggested as a novel method for sand fly larval control, and the feasibility of this method has been established using diflubenzuron, a benzoylphenylurea chitin synthesis inhibitor, to control larvae of *P. papatasi* (Mascari et al. 2007). The objective of this study was to assess novaluron, which also is a benzoylphenylurea chitin synthesis inhibitor, as a rodent feed-through to control sand fly larvae. The development and survival of *P. papatasi* larvae fed feces of Syrian hamsters, *Mesocricetus auratus*, which had been fed a diet containing novaluron was evaluated.

## Materials and Methods

**Feeding Protocol.** Twelve Syrian hamsters were housed individually in micro-isolator cages. The maintenance of the hamsters and the experimental procedures of this research followed Animal Care and Use Protocol 05-074, which was approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA. Research was con-

Material has been reviewed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. There is no objection to its presentation and/or publication. The opinions or assertions contained herein are the private views of the authors and are not to be construed as official, or as reflecting true views of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Entomology, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Agricultural Experiment Station, 402 Life Sciences, Baton Rouge, LA 70803.

<sup>2</sup> Corresponding author, e-mail: tmascari@agcenter.lsu.edu.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine, Baton Rouge, LA 70803.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Entomology, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, 503 Robert Grant Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910-7500.

# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>2007</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2007 to 00-00-2007</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Evaluation of Novaluron as a Feed-Through Insecticide for Control of Immature Sand Flies (Diptera: Psychodidae)</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Department of Entomology, 503 Robert Grant Ave, Silver Spring, MD, 20910-7500</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>see report</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

ducted in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and other federal statutes and regulations relating to animals and experiments involving animals and adheres to principles stated in the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (National Research Council Publication, 1996 ed.).

Four hamster diets were prepared by adding novaluron (98.8% active ingredient [AI], Makhteshim Agan Industries Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel) to a meal form laboratory rodent diet (5001 Rodent Diet, LabDiet, PMI Nutrition International, Brentwood, MO). Novaluron was added to the meal form hamster diet to achieve four concentrations in the diet (0, 9.88, 98.8, and 988 ppm) and was thoroughly mixed.

Three hamsters were randomly assigned to each of the four diet groups (0, 9.88, 98.8, or 988 ppm novaluron). The initial body weight of the hamsters was measured on the day before the experiment. The body weight of hamsters in different diet groups was compared using analysis of variance (ANOVA), performed with the general linear model (GLM) procedure of SAS (SAS Institute 2001).

At 1200 hours each day for 9 d, each hamster was provided 25 g of their respective diet. The uneaten portion of the food was collected the next day at 1200 hours, and the daily food intake for each hamster was calculated. The daily dosages of novaluron that were ingested by the hamsters were calculated by multiplying the daily food intake by the concentration of novaluron in the hamster's diet. Both the daily food intake and the daily dosages of novaluron for individual hamsters were compared within hamster diet groups; daily food intake and the daily dosage of novaluron also were compared between hamster diet groups. Each comparison was performed using a repeated measures ANOVA, performed with the GLM procedure of SAS (SAS Institute 2001). The Tukey multiple comparison procedure was used to separate significantly different means.

The feces produced by each hamster were collected daily for 9 d. The feces were placed in uncovered glass vials and dried at room temperature for 7 d. Once dry, the feces were stored at  $-70^{\circ}\text{C}$  until used.

**Bioassay.** A laboratory colony of sand flies was established at Louisiana State University by using specimens obtained from a long-standing colony of a Turkish strain of *P. papatasi* maintained in the Department of Entomology at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (Silver Spring, MD). The sand flies in the colony were reared using a larval diet composed of a dried and decomposed mixture of rabbit feces and rabbit chow (1:1) (Young et al. 1981). The colony was maintained in environmental chambers at  $28^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 90% RH, and a photoperiod of 14:10 (L:D) h.

Six larval diets were used in sand fly larval bioassays. The feces collected from hamsters on day 9 were pooled by treatments and crushed using a glass mortar and pestle. Four groups of larvae were fed feces of hamsters in each hamster diet groups. Two additional groups of sand fly larvae were fed the rabbit feces-rabbit chow larval diet containing either 0 or 988 ppm novaluron. This approach allowed comparisons be-

tween the survival of sand fly larvae fed feces of hamsters that had been fed diets without novaluron and the untreated rabbit feces-rabbit chow larval diet as well as comparisons between the survival of sand fly larvae fed feces of hamsters that had been fed diets containing novaluron and a larval diet treated directly with novaluron.

The larval bioassays were conducted according to the methods described by Mascari et al. (2007). A 0.1-g portion of the larval diets was transferred to the plaster surface of each bioassay vial. Ten second instars ( $13 \pm 1$  d old) were transferred to each bioassay vial and held in an environmental chamber at  $28^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 90% RH, and a photoperiod of 14:10 (L:D) h. Six bioassay vials were used for each of the six larval diet groups.

The larvae were observed under magnification daily. Larval mortality, defined as the lack of response to prodding with a blunt probe after 15 s, was recorded, and the larvae were observed for abnormal behavioral and morphological characteristics. Evidence of feeding, the presence of frass in the vials, and dark material in the guts of larvae also was monitored.

The percentage of survival of sand flies and the age of the sand flies at death in each larval diet group were compared with a repeated measures ANOVA performed with the GLM procedure (SAS Institute 2001). The Tukey multiple comparison procedure was used to separate significantly different means. The mean number of days until adult emergence for larvae fed each larval diet was compared using Student's *t*-test (SAS Institute 2001). The percentage of survival of sand flies fed feces of untreated hamsters and the untreated rabbit feces-rabbit chow standard larval diet also was compared using Student's *t*-test (SAS Institute 2001).

## Results

**Feeding Protocol.** The mean body weight of the 12 Syrian hamsters was  $136.0 \pm 20.1$  g, and the mean body weights of hamsters in the different hamster diet groups were not significantly different ( $F = 0.57$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $P = 0.65$ ). The mean daily food intake of the hamsters was  $7.6 \pm 1.7$ ,  $8.2 \pm 1.7$ ,  $7.7 \pm 1.3$ , and  $7.6 \pm 0.8$  g for hamsters receiving diets containing 0, 9.88, 98.8, and 988 ppm novaluron, respectively, and it was not significantly different ( $F = 1.00$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $P = 0.40$ ). The estimated mean daily dosages of novaluron for hamsters were  $0.6 \pm 0.1$ ,  $6.2 \pm 0.9$ , and  $56.6 \pm 7.7$  mg/kg body weight for hamsters receiving 9.88, 98.8, and 988 ppm novaluron, respectively.

**Bioassay.** Larvae in each of the larval diet groups were observed feeding, and frass was found in each bioassay vial. The mean percentage of survival from second instar to adult for the sand flies in the untreated hamster feces larval diet group was 100%, and it was not significantly different from the  $98.3 \pm 4.2\%$  survival for sand flies in the rabbit feces-rabbit chow larval diet group ( $t = -1.00$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $P = 0.34$ ; Table 1).

Sand fly larvae that were fed feces of hamsters that had consumed diets containing novaluron and larvae

**Table 1.** Percentage of mortality and longevity of second instars ( $13 \pm 1$  d old) of *P. papatasi* larvae fed feces of Syrian hamsters that had been fed a diet containing 0, 9.88, 98.8, and 988 ppm, or in an aged rabbit feces-rabbit chow (1:1) larval diet containing 0 and 988 ppm novaluron

Larval diet group	Mortality (%)	Longevity (d)
Hamster feces		
988 ppm	100.0a	4.7 ± 1.9a
98.8 ppm	100.0a	4.9 ± 2.0a
9.88 ppm	100.0a	4.8 ± 1.7a
0 ppm	0.0b	N.A.
Aged rabbit feces-rabbit chow		
988 ppm	100.0a	4.4 ± 1.6a
0 ppm	1.7 ± 4.18b	N.A.

Data are mean ± SE of six replicates with 10 larvae per replicate. Values within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different from each other ( $P > 0.05$ ). N.A., not applicable.

that had been fed the rabbit feces-rabbit chow larval diet containing 988 ppm novaluron were ataxic, ceased feeding, and died before pupation (Table 1). The mean longevity of sand fly larvae fed feces of hamsters that had been fed 9.88, 98.8, and 988 ppm novaluron, or the rabbit feces-rabbit chow larval diet containing 988 ppm novaluron was not significantly different (Table 1).

### Discussion

The quantity of food eaten by the hamsters in this study was not affected by the incorporation of novaluron in a powdered diet. This suggests that novaluron-treated diets are palatable to hamsters and that novaluron could be incorporated into baits for other rodents. Some important rodent reservoirs of *L. major* in parts of the Middle East and Asia, including *Rhombomys opimus* and *Meriones libycus*, are readily attracted to grain-based baits (Yaghoobi-Ershadi et al. 2000, Yaghoobi-Ershadi et al. 2005). In Sub-Saharan Africa, rodent reservoirs of *L. major* such as *Arvicanthis* spp., *Mastomys* spp., and *Tatera* spp. are granivorous and also could be targeted with treated baits.

Sand fly larvae fed feces of hamsters that had been fed a diet containing novaluron began to die at a time when the control sand flies were molting from the second to third instar. This observation is consistent with second instar spined soldier bugs, *Podisus maculiventris* (Say), that had been exposed to a novaluron-treated substrate, and later exhibited ataxia and died as larvae (Cutler et al. 2006). The mortality of second instar *Culex quinquefasciatus* Say and *Aedes aegypti* (L.) principally occurred during the larval stage when they were exposed to 1 ppb novaluron in water (Mulla et al. 2003, Su et al. 2003).

Previously, diflubenzuron was evaluated as a rodent feed-through for sand fly larvae (Mascari et al. 2007). Unlike the present findings with novaluron, second instars of sand flies that were fed feces of hamsters that had been fed diets containing diflubenzuron died during the larval-to-pupal molt.

The pharmacokinetics of novaluron in mammalian systems make it an appropriate choice for use in

treated rodent baits. Novaluron is of very low toxicity to mammals by ingestion and other routes of exposure (FAO 2005). After ingestion the majority of novaluron is eliminated unchanged in the feces (FAO 2005). Novaluron is persistent in the environment. In a rotational crop study where 100 g (AI)/ha was applied to soil, between 32 and 49% of the original compound was still present after 127–195 d (FAO 2005). The results of this study suggest that a control strategy using rodent baits containing novaluron to control phlebotomine sand flies and zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis may be possible.

### Acknowledgments

We thank Phillip Lawyer (National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD) for helpful support and suggestions for working with *P. papatasi*. This article was published with approval of the Director of Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station as manuscript 07-26-0049. This work was supported by a grant from the Deployed War-Fighter Protection Research Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Defense through the Armed Forces Pest Management Board.

### References Cited

- Artemiev, M. M., O. A. Flerova, and A. E. Belyaev. 1972. Quantitative evaluation of the productivity of breeding places of sandflies in the wild and in villages. *Med. Parazitol. (Mosk)* 41: 31–35.
- Cutler, G. C., C. D. Scott-Dupree, J. H. Tolman, and C. R. Harris. 2006. Toxicity of the insect growth regulator novaluron to the non-target predatory bug *Podisus maculiventris* (Heteroptera: Pentatomidae). *Biol. Control* 38: 196–204.
- Faizulin, F. G. 1980. Experience on organization and implementation of control of zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis in Golodnaya Steppe of Uzbekskaya SSR, p. 17. USSR Ministry of Health and WHO Seminar on Control of Leishmaniasis. Moscow, USSR.
- [FAO] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2005. JMPR-Pesticide residue data, pp. 797–871. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Karapet'ian, A. B., L. N. Dzhabarov, R. I. Mamigonova, and E. A. Sabatov. 1983. Use of D-20 aerosol insecticide smoke pots in controlling burrow sandflies. *Med. Parazitol. (Mosk)* 4: 78–81.
- Mascari, T. M., M. A. Mitchell, E. D. Rowton, and L. D. Foil. 2007. Laboratory evaluation of diflubenzuron as a feed-through for the control of immature sand flies (Diptera: Psychodidae). *J. Med. Entomol.* 44: 171–174.
- Morsy, T., R. Abdoul, M. Sawat, M. Arafat, and B. El Gozamy. 1993. Some aspects of *Phlebotomus papatasi* (Scopoli) in greater Cairo, Egypt. *J. Egypt. Soc. Parasitol.* 23: 399–417.
- Mulla, M. S., U. Thavara, A. Tawatsin, J. Chomposri, M. Zaim, and T. Su. 2003. Laboratory and field evaluation of novaluron, a new acylurea insect growth regulator, against *Aedes aegypti* (Diptera: Culicidae). *J. Vector Ecol.* 28: 241–254.
- SAS Institute. 2001. SAS system for Windows, release 8.2. SAS Institute, Cary, NC.
- Seyedi-Rashti, M. A., and A. Nadim. 1973. Attempt to control zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis in the Isfahan area, Iran, p. 135. In Proceedings of the 9th International Congress on Tropical Medicine and Malaria, 14–21 October 1973, Athens, Greece.

- Su, T., M. S. Mulla, and M. Zaim. 2003. Laboratory and field evaluations of novaluron, a new insect growth regulator (IGR), against *Culex* mosquitoes. *J. Am. Mosq. Control Assoc.* 19: 408–418.
- [WHO] World health Organization. 1968. WHO inter-regional traveling seminar on leishmaniasis. World health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland.
- [WHO] World Health Organization. 2007. Leishmaniasis. World health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. (<http://www.who.int/leishmaniasis/en/>).
- Yaghoobi-Ershadi, M. R., A. A. Akhavan, A. R. Zahraei-Ramazani, E. Javadian, and M. Motavalli-Emami. 2000. Field trials for the control of zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis in Badrood, Iran. *Ann. Saudi Med.* 20: 386–389.
- Yaghoobi-Ershadi, M. R., A. R. Zahraei-Ramazani, A. A. Akhavan, and A. R. Jalali-Zand, H. Abdoli, A. Nadim. 2005. Rodent control operations against zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis in rural Iran. *Ann. Saudi Med.* 25: 309–312.
- Young, D. G., P. V. Perkins, and R. G. Endris. 1981. A larval diet for rearing phlebotomine sand flies (Diptera: Psychodidae). *J. Med. Entomol.* 18: 446.

*Received 12 December 2006; accepted 14 March 2007.*

---