

# OPERATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC NOTES

## FIELD PRESERVATION AND STORAGE OF MOSQUITOES FOR LABORATORY STUDIES

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The simple technique for determining whether a mosquito is parous or nulliparous is by examining the state of the tracheae supplying the ovaries. The tracheoles of the nulliparous mosquito are wound into tight skeins from which run the very fine terminal tracheoles leading to the follicles. Following a blood meal the ovaries expand with the development of the eggs and these skeins become unravelled. After oviposition, the ovary contracts almost to its original size but the tracheal skeins remain unravelled. Using this criterion the parous state of a mosquito can be determined by simple dissection and microscopical examination of the ovaries as described by Detinova (1962).

The main practical difficulty arising from this technique lies in the fact that mosquitoes caught in animal-baited traps are often engorged, and must be examined within a few hours of capture before the ovaries become much enlarged and the skeins unravelled. In addition, this, and the more specific techniques for determining the number of ovarian cycles undergone by the mosquito require freshly killed material, a condition which may be difficult to fulfill if the laboratory is some distance from the field.

To overcome these difficulties the following technique was developed in connection with ecological studies on *Culex (Melanoconion) portesi* (Senevet and Abonnenc, 1941) in Trinidad where field collections were made from rodent-baited traps situated some 30 miles from the Laboratory. It has since been tried with *Simulium* and *Culicoides* and is considered to have a wide application for all types of insect dissection where "freshly killed" material is required.

Mosquitoes were removed from the traps by means of an aspirator and transferred to 1-pint Mason jars lined with damp plaster-of-paris and fitted with an inverted cone. On arrival at the field headquarters the mosquitoes were knocked down in the jars with carbon dioxide, tipped out into a petri dish, and those required for dissection picked out and while still alive placed directly into normal saline (0.9 percent NaCl) to which a very small quantity of household liquid detergent had been added. The mosquitoes were collected in batches of not more than 30 in about 5 ml. of saline in small plastic shell vials. When each batch was complete it was dropped directly onto dry ice in an insulated container; freezing took place in less than a minute. The frozen

mosquitoes were then transported to the laboratory when convenient.

For storage it was found that the frozen specimens could be kept in the ice compartment of a refrigerator for about 1 week, in a commercial deep freeze at  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ . for 2 weeks and for at least  $5\frac{1}{2}$  months at  $-60^{\circ}\text{C}$ . or on dry ice. The upper time limit of storage at  $-60^{\circ}\text{C}$ . has not been determined. For examination each vial was thawed out individually, since once warm the mosquitoes deteriorated rapidly and dissections had to be completed within 1 hour of thawing. As the material cannot be refrozen the original batch size is governed by the number of insects that could be dissected in that time. Dissections were made in fresh saline.

After  $5\frac{1}{2}$  months at  $-60^{\circ}\text{C}$ . the blood meal of engorged mosquitoes still looked fresh and had not clotted, there was no difficulty in performing the ovarian dissections and the dilations in the ovarioles of parous females were clearly visible.

The basic technique of freezing in normal saline using dry ice should be capable of considerable adaptation to local needs. It should be of particular value in temperate and northern latitudes when material collected during times of high population densities during the spring or summer months could be stored for examination at leisure during the following winter.

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### Reference

DETINOVA, T. S. 1962. Age grouping methods in diptera of medical importance. WHO Monograph No. 47.

### AGE GRADING OF MOSQUITOES FROM PARASITIC MITES

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A simple age grading technique which can be used by non-professional personnel would be very useful in many mosquito control operations. Gillet (1957), suggests that the presence of parasitic mites might indicate nulliparity, as these leave

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