COLONIZATION OF ANOPHELES OCCIDENTALIS AND ANOPHELES HERMSI

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ABSTRACT. The colonization of Anopheles occidentalis is described and contrasted with colonization of a related species, An. hermsi. The latter species formerly was considered to be conspecific with the former, but the 2 species differ considerably in biological characteristics.

Three of the 5 species comprising the North American Anopheles maculipennis complex occur in California: An. occidentalis Dyar and Knab, An. freeborni Aitken and An. hermsi Barr and Guptavanij. The latter species was described only recently (Barr and Guptavanij 1988). Anopheles freeborni was colonized by Hardman (1947), but he was not able to colonize An. occidentalis. Anopheles occidentalis was maintained for 6 generations by Baker and Kitzmiller (1965) by forced mating. Both An. hermsi (as "southern occidentalis") and An. occidentalis were colonized by Christensen, the former with ease and the latter with difficulty; An. occidentalis was maintained for a few generations without forced mating.

Anopheles freeborni and An. hermsi were reared in more or less standard ways (Trembley 1955, Gerberg 1970). A colony of An. freeborni was obtained from R. K. Washino at the University of California Davis; it had been established from material collected in the Davis area in 1982. Anopheles hermsi larvae were collected from the type locality in Malibu Canyon, Los Angeles Co., California, in 1981. Larvae were reared in tap water in small lots, about 125 in a surface area of 585 cm², at ambient laboratory temperature and daylight. They were fed a 4:2:2:1:1 mixture of alfalfa pellets, high protein baby cereal, instant oatmeal, wheat germ, powdered infant formula and liver powder, which was ground fine and sifted. Adults were kept in 1-gal (3.8-liter) cardboard containers covered with moist toweling and supplied with sugar cubes. Five-day old females were allowed to engorge on mice, and 3–4 days later they laid eggs on tap water in paper cups (118-ml) lined with filter paper. The eggs hatched within 3 days.

Anopheles occidentalis larvae were collected in Coyote Hills Regional Park, Alameda Co., California, in 1981 and reared as the other species. Females did not feed readily on mice and thus were fed on humans. Adults did not mate in the containers provided; therefore, forced mating was necessary. The adults were anesthetized, males were impaled on minuten needles and their wings and hindlegs removed; a male was used for mating no more than 3 females. The females had been allowed to engorge before mating. Females would not oviposit in paper containers; therefore, they were placed over water in pans covered with bobbinet, the pans being lined with filter paper to prevent stranding of eggs.

The laboratory characteristics of An. occidentalis indicate that it is biologically rather different from An. freeborni and An. hermsi and support the placement of the latter much closer to An. freeborni than to An. occidentalis.

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Vincent Resh, Steve Balling, Gary Lamberti and Josh Collins in obtaining larvae of An. occidentalis, R. K. Washino for supplying the freeborni colony and pertinent literature, and Virginia Hansen for editorial assistance.

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1 Supported in part by Research Grant AI-11847 from the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, and in part by special funds for mosquito research allocated annually through the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California.