

Hematology, Intestinal Parasites, and Selected Disease Antibodies from a Population of Bobcats (*Felis rufus*) in Central Arkansas

Authors: HEIDT, GARY A., Rucker, Richard A., Kennedy, Michael L., and Baeyens, Marilyn E.

Source: Journal of Wildlife Diseases, 24(1) : 180-183

Published By: Wildlife Disease Association

URL: <https://doi.org/10.7589/0090-3558-24.1.180>

BioOne Complete (complete.BioOne.org) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/terms-of-use.

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non-commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

Hematology, Intestinal Parasites, and Selected Disease Antibodies from a Population of Bobcats (*Felis rufus*) in Central Arkansas

Gary A. Heidt,¹ Richard A. Rucker,² Michael L. Kennedy,² and Marilyn E. Baeyens,³ ¹ Department of Biology, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas 72204, USA; ² Department of Biology, Memphis State University, Memphis, Tennessee 38152, USA; ³ North Hills Animal Clinic, North Little Rock, Arkansas 72116, USA

ABSTRACT: Eight bobcats with adjoining or overlapping home ranges were examined. Hematological values were within previously reported ranges. Six bobcats demonstrated antibody titers to *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Isospora* spp., *Taenia taeniaeformis*, *Spirometra mansoides*, *Physoloptera rara*, *Toxocara cati*, *Strongyloides* spp., *Trichurus* spp., *Capillaria* spp., and *Ancylostoma* spp. were found also in the animals examined. The mean number of parasite species per host was 4.1. All bobcats tested negative for serum antibodies to Rocky Mountain spotted fever (*Rickettsia rickettsii*). Two bobcats had titers $\leq 1:20$ for tularemia (*Francisella tularensis*), and two were positive for leptospirosis (*Leptospira* spp.).

Key words: Bobcat, hematology, parasites, serology, *Felis rufus*.

Literature dealing with parasites and diseases of bobcats (*Felis rufus*) is extensive (for a review see: McCord and Cardoza, 1982; Tumilson et al., 1985). However, the majority of these studies, either have been limited in scope, involved broad geographic areas, or examined animals whose interrelationships were unknown. Hematological data, on the other hand, is limited (Fuller et al., 1985; Kocan et al., 1985). Therefore, there is a need for data on bobcats with documented home range relationships.

During 1982-1984, eight bobcats (five male, three female) were captured, radio-collared, and subsequently tracked on a 71-km² area of the Muddy Creek Wildlife Management Area (approximately 80 km west of Hot Springs, Montgomery Co., Arkansas; 34°35' to 34°42'N and 93°45' to 93°52'W). It was determined that the eight bobcats had either adjoining or overlapping home ranges and formed a closely associated part of the general population in the area (Rucker et al., 1985). This study

reports on the intestinal parasites, selected serum antibodies, and hematology of the eight bobcats.

Animals were captured using Northwoods Number 1.75 coil-spring leg-hold traps equipped with off-set jaws (Northwoods Wildlife Management Equipment, P.O. Box 375, Greensburg, Pennsylvania 15601, USA). Bobcats were immobilized with 10 mg/kg ketamine hydrochloride (Ketaset, Bristol Laboratories, Thompson Road, P.O. Box 4755, Syracuse, New York 13221, USA) and 1.5 mg/kg acetylpromazine (Ayerst Laboratories, 685 3rd Street, New York, New York 10017, USA) using a 1-cc concussion-fired dart shot from a 1-m blowgun (Pneu-Dart, Inc., Williamsport, Pennsylvania 17703, USA). After being anesthetized, bobcats were placed in a holding cage and transported to a veterinary clinic (fourth author, MEB) for examination and marking. Blood samples were taken (using a syringe) from either the cephalic or jugular vein and placed into vacutainer tubes containing EDTA and vacutainer tubes without anticoagulant. Fecal samples were examined for ova and cysts of intestinal parasites. Following examination and full recovery from anesthesia, animals were released at the site of capture. More detailed information concerning the capture and handling of animals is given in Rucker et al. (1985).

Hematology was conducted on a model 5550 Coulter Counter (Coulter Electronics, Inc., P.O. Box 2145, Hialeah, Florida 33012, USA). Fecal flotations were conducted using fecasol and a fecalyzer (Eusco Pharmaceutical Corporation, Ocean-side, New York 11572, USA); identifications followed Sloss and Kemp (1978). Tulare-

TABLE 1. Mean hematological values for bobcats examined from Arkansas compared to those reported for bobcats from Oklahoma and Minnesota.

Parameter	Present study (n = 8)	Oklahoma ^a (n = 11)	Minnesota ^b (n = 27)
Hemoglobin (g/dl)	12.28 (0.59) ^c	13.1 (1.6)	13.30 (1.57)
Hematocrit (%)	36.47 (2.24)	36.3 (4.5)	38.72 (4.37)
Mean corpuscular volume (fl)	53.68 (2.83)	59.5 (4.1)	49.35 (10.49)
Erythrocyte count (10 ⁶ /cc)	7.11 (0.48)	6.1 (4.5)	7.98 (1.46)
White blood cell count (10 ³ /cc)	11.59 (3.06)	10.6 (6.5)	15.81 (5.04)
Neutrophils (10 ² /cc)	69.60 (9.48)	82.7 (4.2)	14.04 (1.02)
Lymphocytes (10 ² /cc)	24.10 (8.22)	21.7 (8.1)	1.77 (1.02)
Monocytes (10 ² /cc)	2.02 (1.12)	0.7 (1.1)	0.00 (0.00)
Eosinophils (10 ² /cc)	2.78 (3.92)	3.1 (6.9)	0.00 (0.00)
Basophils (10 ² /cc)	0.10 (0.33)	0.3 (2.9)	0.00 (0.00)

^a Kocan et al. (1985); these data only include bobcats without observable erythroparasites (*Cytauxzoon felis*).

^b Fuller et al. (1985).

^c Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

mia and leptospirosis serum antibody titers were determined by standard slide agglutination techniques (Damon and Johnson, 1944; Galton et al., 1965). Sera were tested for antibodies to *Toxoplasma gondii* by the hemagglutination technique (Jacobs and Lunde, 1957) and Rocky Mountain spotted fever by complement fixation (Centers for Disease Control, 1981). During the study, three bobcats died and were necropsied by the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (Athens, Georgia 30602, USA); intestinal parasite data are included.

Means and standard deviations of hematological values for bobcats are presented in Table 1. Included, for comparison, are hematological data from Kocan et al. (1985) and Fuller et al. (1985). In general, data from these studies are in agreement, and all fall within the reported ranges for other felids (Wallach and Boever, 1983). As with the other studies, leukocytes demonstrated the greatest variation. Kocan et al. (1985) pointed out that stress during trapping and anesthesia may influence blood parameters, particularly leukocytes.

Ten species of intestinal parasites were recorded from the eight hosts (all bobcats were infected). The number of species in an individual host ranged from one to eight, with a mean of 4.1. The most commonly

observed species were *Toxoplasma gondii* and *Ancylostoma* spp. (each found in six hosts). Other species and the number of hosts included *Isospora* spp. (four hosts), *Taenia taeniaeformis* (one), *Spirometra mansoides* (one), *Physaloptera rara* (one), *Toxocara cati* (three), *Strongyloides* spp. (two), *Trichuris* spp. (one), and *Capillaria* spp. (five). In addition, unidentified ascarid ova were recovered from three hosts.

Stone and Pence (1978) and Watson et al. (1981) conducted two comprehensive studies on the helminth parasites of bobcats. Their studies concluded that there was a great deal of variation in the parasitic fauna; probably related to locally available prey. Further, Watson et al. (1981) felt that 13 species of helminths should be considered typical faunal components of bobcats. Of these, five were found in this study (*Spirometra mansoides*, *Ancylostoma* spp., *Physaloptera rara*, *Capillaria* spp., *Toxocara cati*). Our intestinal parasite count may, however, be underestimated since we could only conduct fecal floats one time and were able to have just three of the eight hosts necropsied.

Toxoplasma gondii is of special interest since six (75%) bobcats exhibited serum antibodies to the parasite (three had titers $\geq 1:256$, two had titers $\geq 1:128$, and one had a titer $\geq 1:64$). The presence of serum

antibodies, while not indicating an active infection, does indicate exposure.

Toxoplasmosis has been extensively documented in bobcats and seropositive results have been quite variable. For example, Oertley and Walls (1980) found 27 of 150 (18.6%) bobcats positive in West Virginia and Georgia, Marchiondo et al. (1976) reported 12 of 27 (44%) in New Mexico, Franti et al. (1976) found 59 of 86 (69%) in northern California, and Walton and Walls (1964) recorded 11 of 15 (77.3%) from Fort Stewart, Georgia. More recently, Dubey et al. (1987) found a congenitally acquired infection. Since fields are known to play a major role in transmission of the parasite (Miller et al., 1972; Wallach and Boever, 1983), bobcats may be an important factor in the infection in wildlife as well as humans regularly in contact with wild felids (Oertley and Walls, 1980; Heidt et al., 1985).

Sera were tested for antibodies to tularemia (*Francisella tularensis*), leptospirosis (*Leptospira* spp.), and Rocky Mountain spotted fever (*Rickettsia rickettsii*). None of the bobcats tested positive to Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Two bobcats demonstrated serum antibody titers of $\leq 1:20$ against tularemia and two different bobcats demonstrated antibody titers against leptospirosis (serovars *pomona* and *grippotyphosa*). These diseases did not appear to be of major importance for this particular population during the study. However, since both tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever are of considerable importance in Arkansas (McChesney et al., 1982; McChesney and Narain, 1983), further research in this area is warranted. Tularemia serum antibody titers have been reported previously in bobcats from Florida, Georgia, and Utah (McKeever et al., 1958; Thorpe et al., 1965). Bobcats infected with leptospirosis serovars *pomona*, *ballum*, and *grippotyphosa* have been reported in Georgia (McKeever et al., 1958; Shotts et al., 1975) and *pomona* in Louisiana (Roth, 1964).

We would like to thank personnel of the

United States Forest Service (Oden Ranger District of the Ouachita National Forest) and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for permission to work on lands under their control and for their cooperation and assistance throughout the study. George Stewart, Robert Leonard, Kimberly Rucker, and Robert Willging worked on various aspects of the field phase. Thomas McChesney, Robert Howell, Steve Waldron, and Letty Henderson of the Arkansas Department of Health arranged for and tested the serum. This study was funded, in part, under provisions of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior (Study XV of Project W-56-24) and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock College of Science's Office of Research and Technology.

LITERATURE CITED

- CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL. 1981. Rocky Mountain spotted fever—United States 1980. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 30(26).
- DAMON, S. R., AND M. B. JOHNSON. 1944. A rapid agglutination test for the diagnosis of tularemia. *Journal of Laboratory Clinical Medicine* 29: 976-977.
- DUBEY, J. P., W. J. QUINN, AND D. WEINANDY. 1987. Fatal neonatal toxoplasmosis in a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*). *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 23: 324-327.
- FRANTI, C. E., H. P. RIEMAN, D. E. BEHYMER, D. SUTHER, J. A. HOWARTH, AND R. RUPPANNER. 1976. Prevalence of *Toxoplasma gondii* antibodies in wild and domestic animals in northern California. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 169: 901-906.
- FULLER, T. K., W. E. BERG, AND D. W. KUEHN. 1985. Hematology and serum chemistry of bobcats in northcentral Minnesota. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 21: 29-32.
- GALTON, M. M., C. R. SULZER, C. A. SANTA ROSA, AND M. J. FIELDS. 1965. Applications of a microtechnique to the agglutination test for leptospirosis antibodies. *Applied Microbiology* 13: 81-85.
- HEIDT, G. A., C. HARGER, H. HARGER, AND T. C. MCCHESENEY. 1985. Serological study of selected disease antibodies in Arkansas—Furbearer trappers, a high risk group. *Journal of Arkansas Medical Society* 82: 265-269.
- JACOBS, L., AND M. N. LUNDE. 1957. A hemagglutination test for toxoplasmosis. *The Journal of Parasitology* 43: 308-314.

- KOCAN, A. A., E. F. BLOUIN, AND B. L. GUNN. 1985. Hematologic and serum chemical values for free-ranging bobcats, *Felis rufus* (Schreber), with reference to animals with natural infections of *Cytauxzoon felis* Kier. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 21: 190-192.
- MARCHIONDO, A. A., D. W. DUSZYNSKI, AND G. O. MAUPIN. 1976. Prevalence of antibodies to *Toxoplasma gondii* in wild and domestic animals of New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 12: 226-232.
- MCCHESENEY, T. C., AND J. NARAIN. 1983. A five-year evaluation of tularemia in Arkansas. *Journal of Arkansas Medical Society* 80: 257-262.
- , ———, AND J. P. LOFGREN. 1982. Five year update on Rocky Mountain spotted fever in Arkansas. *Journal of Arkansas Medical Society* 79: 50-55.
- MCCORD, C. M., AND J. E. CARDOZA. 1982. Bobcat and lynx. In *Wild mammals of North America*, J. A. Chapman and G. A. Feldhammer (eds.). The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1147 pp.
- MCKEEVER, S., G. W. GORMAN, J. F. CHAPMAN, M. M. GALTON, AND D. K. POWERS. 1958. Incidence of leptospirosis in wild mammals from southwest Georgia with a report of new hosts for 6 serotypes of leptospire. *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 7: 646-655.
- MILLER, N. L., J. K. FRENKEL, AND J. P. DUBEY. 1972. Oral infections with toxoplasma cysts and oocysts in felines, other mammals, and in birds. *The Journal of Parasitology* 58: 928-937.
- OERTLEY, K. D., AND K. W. WALLS. 1980. Prevalence of antibodies to *Toxoplasma gondii* among bobcats of West Virginia and Georgia. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 177: 852-853.
- ROTH, E. E. 1964. Leptospirosis in wildlife in the United States. *Proceedings 101 Annual Meeting of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, pp. 211-218.
- RUCKER, R. A., R. TUMLISON, G. A. HEIDT, M. J. HARVEY, V. R. MCDANIEL, AND M. L. KENNEDY. 1985. Natural history and management of the bobcat in Arkansas. In *Biology of the bobcat in Arkansas*, R. A. Rucker and R. Tumilson (eds.). Unpublished Technical Report, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas, pp. 1-177.
- SHOTTS, E. B., C. L. ANDREWS, AND T. W. HARVEY. 1975. Leptospirosis in selected wild mammals of the Florida Panhandle and southwest Georgia. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 167: 587-589.
- SLOSS, M. W., AND R. L. KEMP. 1978. *Veterinary clinical parasitology*. Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 244 pp.
- STONE, J. E., AND D. B. PENCE. 1978. Ecology of helminth parasitism in the bobcat from west Texas. *The Journal of Parasitology* 64: 195-302.
- THORPE, B. D., R. W. SIDWELL, D. E. JOHNSON, K. J. SMART, AND D. D. PARKER. 1965. Tularemia in the wildlife and livestock of the Great Salt Lake desert region, 1951 through 1965. *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 14: 622-637.
- TUMLISON, R., V. R. MCDANIEL, R. A. RUCKER, M. J. HARVEY, M. L. KENNEDY, AND G. A. HEIDT. 1985. A bibliography of bobcat literature. In *Biology of the bobcat in Arkansas*, R. A. Rucker and R. Tumilson (eds.). Unpublished Technical Report, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas, pp. 179-216.
- WALLACH, J. D., AND W. J. BOEVER. 1983. *Diseases of exotic animals: Medical and surgical management*. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1159 pp.
- WALTON, B. C., AND K. W. WALLS. 1964. Prevalence of toxoplasmosis in wild animals from Fort Stewart, Georgia as indicated by serological tests and mouse inoculation. *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 13: 530-533.
- WATSON, T. G., V. F. NETTLES, AND W. R. DAVIDSON. 1981. Endoparasites and selected infectious agents in bobcats (*Felis rufus*) from West Virginia and Georgia. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 17: 547-554.

Received for publication 6 October 1986.