**STRONGYLOIDES FERREIRAI RODRIGUES, VICENTE & GOMES, 1985**  
(NEMATODA, RHABDIASOIDEA) IN RODENT COPROLITES (8,000-2,000 YEARS BP), FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES FROM PIAUÍ, BRAZIL

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_Eggs and larvae of Strongyloides ferreirai Rodrigues, Vicente & Gomes, 1985 are identified in Kerodon rupestris (Wied.) coprolites dated from 8,000-2,000 years BP (Before Present), collected from archaeological sites from the northeast of Brazil._

Key words: coprolites – parasites in archaeological material – paleoparasitology – _Kerodon rupestris_ (Wied.)

Copolites found in South American archaeological sites are characterized by their zoological diversity. Sites of prehistoric human occupation were also used by wild animals and their desiccated faeces were preserved in the sedimental layers. Thus, animal coprolites are commonly found and dated by radiocarbon through their association with the remains of hearth.

For the diagnosis of the zoological origin of the coprolites, fresh faeces from animals of the region were obtained for comparison with the archaeological material. In this process morphological comparisons and the study of microscopic remains, including intestinal parasites, are made (Araújo et al., 1982).

This paper reports on the presence of _Strongyloides ferreirai_ Rodrigues, Vicente & Gomes, 1985 eggs and larvae, and eggs of _Trichuris_ sp. found in coprolites identified as of the rodent _Kerodon rupestris_ (Wied.), collected in archaeological sites from Piauí state, Brazil.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The coprolites were sent to our laboratory by the archaeological staff headed by Dr Niêde Guidon, from the “Fundação Museu do Homem Americano”. They were collected from six archaeological sites in Sào Raimundo Nonato, Piauí, northeast of Brazil as described below:

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Larvae and thinly shelled eggs identified as *Strongyloides ferreirai* Rodrigues, Vicente & Gomes, 1985 were found in all the samples of the six archaeological sites (Fig. 2). In three samples, associated with the larvae, eggs of *Trichuris* sp., measuring 61.96 x 31.65 μm (X 10) were observed. All samples turned the rehydration solution to a brown-opaque colour.

The archaeological material was identified as *Kerodon rupestris* (Wied, 1820) (Rodentia, Caviidae) coprolites by comparing them with the recent faeces of this animal species. They differ from other rodent faeces by the size and by being kidney-shaped with a groove on the concave face (Fig. 1).
Fig. 3: *Strongyloides ferreirai* larva found in *Kerodon rupestris* fresh faeces (160x).

*Kerodon rupestris* (Wied, 1820) is a rodent found in Brazilian semi-arid rocky environment, where it breeds and feeds (Lacher, 1981). Their habitats are easily identified by the deposition of great amount of their faeces in rock depressions. In the archaeological region of southeastern Piauí it is still a common inhabitant (Chame et al., 1984).

The larvae found in the coprolites could only be identified after the necropsy of two specimens of *Kerodon rupestris* (Wied, 1820) trapped at the region of São Raimundo Nonato. Rodrigues et al. (1985) described the larvae as belonging to the new species *Strongyloides ferreirai* Rodrigues, Vicente & Gomes, 1985 by the finding of mature forms of the parasite and larvae with the same characteristics as those found in the coprolites (Fig. 3). *Trichuris* eggs were only found in the coprolites and, at the moment, it is impossible to know if they belong to a new or known species, not described in this host.

The parasitic fauna of South American wild animals is not completely studied and, as exemplified in this paper, new species of parasites can be found in archaeological material. Their specific diagnosis can only be established with the capture of animals whose faeces have morphological characteristics and alimentary contents that can be compared with the coprolites.

RESUMO

*Strongyloides ferreirai* Rodrigues, Vicente & Gomes, 1985 (Nematoda, Rhabdiasoidea) em coprólitos de roedores (8.000-2.000 anos AP = Antes do Presente), de sítios arqueológicos do Piauí, Brasil — Ovos e larvas de *Strongyloides ferreirai* Rodrigues, Vicente & Gomes, 1985 foram identificados em coprólitos de *Kerodon rupestris* (Wied.), datados de 8.000 a 2.000 anos AP, coletados em sítios arqueológicos do nordeste do Brasil.

Palavras-chave: coprólitos — parasitos em material arqueológico — paleoparasitologia — *Kerodon rupestris* (Wied.)

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REFERENCES


