

Biotopes of molluscs intermediaries of the cycle of *Fasciola hepatica* (Linnaeus, 1758) in the province of Catamarca.

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Fasciola hepatica life cycle complies with the presence of a mollusk belonging to the family *Lymnaeidae* acting as an intermediate host. In Catamarca, two species of snails have been described as organically infected with larvae of *Fasciola hepatica*: *Lymnaea neotropica* and *Lymnaea viator*. Due to the location of human endemic areas in the province, it is indispensable to identify possible biotopes where snails live and the disease arises, in order to identify new zoonotic foci and work accordingly for their control.

The goal of this study was to locate the habitats with population of the family *Lymnaeidae* within the province of Catamarca.

Conventional malacological methods were used to collect mollusks in departments of: Ancasti (28°44'52"S-65°33'12"W), Andalgalá (27°35'47"S-66°19'41"W), Antofagasta de la Sierra (26°28'20,9"S-67°5'23,2"W), Belén (26°3'21"S-66°56'33,4W), La Paz (28°54'55"-S 65°19'55"W), Paclín (28°08'50"S-65°39'44"W), Santa María (26°38'24"S-66°01'34"W) and Tinogasta (27°07'44,53"S-67°39'59,07"W), with altitudes ranging from 194 up to 3700 meters above sea level. In twenty field trips, (n=1707) mollusks of the *Lymnaea* genus were collected. These were anatomically studied under stereoscopic microscope Leica MZ6, were linear morphometric analysed by using a computerized image analysis system, its soft tissue was drawn while using light camera and the shells were measured. The morphological characteristics of these shells coincide with previous descriptions for *Lymnaea* sp., which allowed to observe that the specimens found in the cities of El Peñón (n=2) (1.96%); Laguna Blanca (n=11) (10.5%) and Medanitos (n=1) (0.26%) showed infection with larvae of trematodes. The discovery of gastropods of *Lymnaeidae* family in different physiographic conditions is the largest description record in the province: these mollusks were found in eight departments in different regions of Catamarca, which is essential for the spreading and colonization of mollusks' populations. The results conclude that, despite having different geographical and climatic characteristics within the same province, the development and continuity of infected snails involved in the cycle of Fascioliasis still occur.

Key words: Biotopes; *Fasciola hepatica*; *Lymnaeidae*; habitats; Catamarca.