

MICROTROMBICULA PELTIFERA, A NEW SUBSTITUTE NAME FOR *M. MICROSCUTA* STEKOLNIKOV, AL-GHAMDI, ALAGAILI AND MAKEPEACE, 2019 (ACARIFORMES, TROMBICULIDAE)

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ABSTRACT: *Microtrombicula peltifera* nom.n. is proposed as a new substitute name to replace *M. microscuta* Stekolnikov, Al-Ghamdi, Alagaili and Makepeace, 2019, which was found to be a junior homonym of *M. microscuta* Zhao, Liang and Qu, 1989. Morphological differences between *M. peltifera* and *M. microscuta* are given.

KEY WORDS: Chigger mites, taxonomy, nomenclature, junior homonym.

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INTRODUCTION

Microtrombicula Ewing, 1950 is a worldwide-distributed genus of chigger mites that includes 208 known species (Nielsen *et al.* 2021). Its last revision on a world level was published more than a half of century ago (Vercammen-Grandjean 1965). The above work regarded 104 species (not counting subspecies) currently belonging to *Microtrombicula*, i.e. half of the species described to date. The genus *Eltonella* Audy, 1956, which was reviewed by Vercammen-Grandjean (1965) together with *Microtrombicula*, was included into *Microtrombicula* by Nadchatram and Dohany (1974). *Marcandrea* Vercammen-Grandjean, 1960 proposed as a subgenus of *Eltonella* (Vercammen-Grandjean 1960) has been raised to genus by Stekolnikov (2018).

In the first report on the chiggers of Saudi Arabia (Stekolnikov *et al.* 2019), *Microtrombicula microscuta* Stekolnikov, Al-Ghamdi, Alagaili and Makepeace, 2019 was described from the ears of *Acomys dimidiatus* (Cretzschmar) (Rodentia: Muridae). We have discovered that a species with the same name, *Microtrombicula microscuta* Zhao, Liang and Qu, 1989 had previously been described from China (Zhao *et al.* 1989) ex nasal fossae of *Hipposideros bicolor* (Temminck) (Chiroptera: Hipposideridae). Therefore, the former species name is a junior homonym of the latter. Since the name *M. microscuta* Stekolnikov, Al-Ghamdi, Alagaili and Makepeace, 2019 has no available junior synonyms, we propose the name *Microtrombicula peltifera* nom.n. as a substitute for it.

SYSTEMATICS

Etymology. The species name *peltifera* is derived from the Greek *peltē*—a small, light infantry

shield, and *phérō*—to carry. The epithet thus means “carrying a small shield”, which is equivalent to the meaning of *microscuta*.

The species *M. microscuta* Zhao, Liang and Qu, 1989 was included in the monograph on the trombiculid mites of China (Li *et al.* 1997), but was omitted from the world checklist of Trombiculidae (Nielsen *et al.* 2021). Since this species has also been overlooked during the description of *M. microscuta* Stekolnikov, Al-Ghamdi, Alagaili and Makepeace, 2019 (syn. of *M. peltifera* nom.n.), we provide below a short comparison of these species. *Microtrombicula peltifera* differs from *M. microscuta* Zhao, Liang and Qu, 1989 in having: a much lesser number of idiosomal setae (26–30 dorsal and 24–26 ventral vs. 44–50 dorsal and 29–34 ventral; sum 50–54 vs. 73–84); two posthumeral rows simple, with six setae each (vs. double, consisting of 18–21 and 10–12 setae, respectively); branched palpal genual and ventral palpal tibial setae (fPp=B/B/NNB) (vs. nude, fPp=B/N/NNN); palpal claw with three (vs. two) prongs; sensilla (trichobothria) forked (vs. nude); three (vs. two) genualae I (σ); seta on leg coxa II nude (vs. branched); one (vs. two: one nude and one with basal cilia) mastitarsala on leg tarsus III.

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