Premature Proposal of the Pine Weevil as a Vector of a Human Pathogen

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We have with great interest read the paper by Tuuminen et al. (1) published in the July 2014 issue of this journal where the pine weevil (Hylobius abietis) is incriminated as a vector of the potential human pathogen Capnocytophaga canimorsus. The authors base their conclusion on the fact that the man, who was infected by C. canimorsus, claimed that “he had been bitten by a large pine weevil on the lateral side of his neck.” The bite mark was a red patch of a diameter of 3 to 4 cm on his skin with a darker red raised center and was noticed when he was admitted to the hospital 3 days later.” It was also stated that he had not encountered any dogs, which are the main carriers of C. canimorsus. Two of us (N.B. and G.N.) have handled pine weevils for several decades. Every year, we collect thousands of them at sawmills for use in research (e.g., see reference 2). The occasional nibbling of our skin by the mandibles of these beetles has never caused any visible injury. And we find it particularly difficult to believe that an infectious dose of viable C. canimorsus could have been transferred from the mouth of a dog or a cat (the normal habitat of C. canimorsus) by a pine weevil, into the skin of this sawmill worker. Pine weevils are attracted to volatiles from fresh conifer wood, and during their migration period in early summer, very large numbers (tens of thousands) may aggregate at sawmills (3, 4), where these beetles may be in-****

REFERENCES


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