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MALLOPHAGA MENOPONIDAE: NEW PARATENIC HOSTS OF *SYNGAMUS TRACHEA* (NEMATODA: SYNGAMIDAE) IN *ALECTORIS RUFA*M. Principato

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It is known that *Syngamus trachea*, a parasite frequently occurring in the respiratory apparatus of fowls, can have a direct or an indirect life cycle. That is important from an epidemiological point of view because the intermediate host can harbour parasites for long. The usual intermediate hosts of *S. trachea* are earthworms (*Annelida*), which swallow the parasite's larvae by feeding on infected faeces on the ground. We could demonstrate that also biting lice (*Mallophaga*) can be paratenic hosts of *S. trachea*, like earthworms. Our observations started with a case of a red-legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa*) infested by *S. trachea*, also showing a severe infestation by biting lice. At a microscope examination, five of those insects also showed the presence of nematode larvae, presumably *S. trachea*. To reach an exact identification, we carried out an experiment consisting in making a healthy sample of partridge swallow four biting lice containing nematode larvae, still alive. The larval migration of the nematodes could not be observed, for the experiment was effected on just one bird, but two weeks after the laboratory contamination, at least two specimens of *S. trachea* adults were observed in the bird's trachea; after the 22nd day eggs of the nematode were present in the bird's faeces. If we consider that *Mallophaga* are obligatory parasites of fowls and they do not feed on earth contaminated by faeces, as earthworms do, it can be assumed that their infestation can occur when the host's feathers and skin are dirty of faeces containing a high number of *S. trachea* eggs.