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EPIDEMIOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON MAN INFESTATION BY  
PYEMOTES TRITICI (ACARI: TARSONEMOIDEA) IN UMBRIA.

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Pyemotes tritici (=Pyemotes ventricosus) is a free-living parasite of insect larvae, commonly known as "the straw or grain itch mite". In many parts of the world it is the cause of dermatitis in people and animals that come in contact with infested material. In Umbria (Central Italy) from 1989 to 1993 a remarkable increase of cases of human dermatitis diagnosed for certain as produced by the sting of these mites were recorded. As per our surveys, the presence of this mite is more and more frequently reported from an unusual environment such as houses, libraries, laboratories, whereas its presence is quite a normal event in a rural environment, represented by granaries, hay-lofts, wood-stores. Three different epidemiological conditions seem to lead the mite to adapt itself to the urban environment: 1) the presence of worm-eaten furniture. In this case the mites are parasites of the wood-worm larvae and infest the domestic environment, stinging man sistematically every time that the insects, their hosts, die or grow to adults. 2) the introduction of firewood into the houses. In this case, because of the presence of gravid females, a quick and heavy environmental infestation can be recorded. 3) the handicraft processing of dry vegetables by way of ornament. In this case mites spread meccanically in the environment and the scarcity of food leads them to sting man repeatedly. Since the dermatitis often reveals itself only 12-16 hours after the sting of these mites, the aforesaid epidemiological notes are of great importance to quickly reach an exact diagnosis.