IMPORTANCE OF RABBIT FARMING IN THE MAINTENANCE OF WILD TRIATOMINAE

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The domestic rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), typically raised in floor systems or cages, may facilitate the maintenance of triatomine bugs, which are vectors of *Trypanosoma cruzi*, due to their confinement in restricted areas. This study aims to report the occurrence of kissing bugs in rabbit farming at the Instituto Federal Baiano - Campus Santa Inês. The municipality of Santa Inês is situated in the Jiquiriçá Valley in the southwestern region of Bahia. This Institute hosts resident students and various livestock species, including goats, sheep, horses, cattle, pigs, birds, and rabbits. Rabbit farming is conducted in a shed adjacent to native vegetation, consisting of Gigante de Flandes, Nova Zelândia, and Borboleta breeds, which are distributed on the ground and in cages. Since the first specimen of the kissing bug was identified in the rabbit farming facility in 2023, six other T. cruzi vectors have been captured on the premises. All captured insects belong to the species *Triatoma melanocephala*, a triatomine considered to be wild. Due to a lack of knowledge among the employees in the rabbit farming sector regarding the identification of kissing bugs, they reported having observed other insects resembling *T. melanocephala* without appropriate diligence. The species identification and subsequent reporting were conducted at the Pathology and Molecular Biology Laboratory of the Instituto Gonçalo Moniz/FIOCRUZ, to which the insects from the Parasitology Laboratory of the Instituto Federal Baiano were sent for initial identification and serving as a point of reference for receiving suspected insects at the Institution. Entomological surveillance is also crucial due to the associated risks of infections in both animals and individuals who reside on campus.

Keywords: Rabbit farming, Chagas disease, *Triatoma melanocephala*