THE WIDESPREAD OF *ANGIOSTRONGYLUS CANTONENSIS* IN SABARÁ, MG, WARNS OF THE RISK OF OCCURRENCE OF THE ZOONOSIS EOSINOPHILIC MENINGITIS

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The current wide distribution of the giant African snail *Achatina fulica* has contributed to the dispersal of the nematode *Angiostrongylus cantonensis*, leading to an increasing number of human cases of eosinophilic meningoencephalitis (EoM), an emerging disease in Brazil. In Minas Gerais state, this parasite was recently reported to Belo Horizonte, the capital of the state. Given this, the present study aims to identify infectious larvae of the *Angiostrongylus* spp. recovered from *A. fulica* collected in the municipality of Sabará, located in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte. Municipal health department agents and researchers involved in the study have been monitoring infected snails in neighborhoods previously known to be infested with African snails since April 2024. So far, six neighborhoods were sampled: Vila Rica (VR) (n=63 snails); General Carneiro Parte Alta (GCA) (n=11); General Carneiro Parte Baixa (GCB) (n=33); Nações Unidas (NU) (n=24); Alvorada (AL) (n=40) and Fátima (FA) (n=37), totaling 208 snails obtained and analyzed. The parasitological analysis followed the technique of artificial digestion of mollusks in HCl 0.7% and nematode larvae recovered were identified based on the analysis of mitochondrial cytochrome *c* oxidase I (MT-CO1). Larvae of *A. cantonensis* were found in five (7.9%) *A. fulica* specimens from VR, three (*27%*) from GCA, eight (24.2%) from GCB, five (20.8%) from NU, 19 (47.5%) from AL, and one (2.7%) from FA, totaling 41 (19%) *A. fulica* specimens testing positive. Given the presence of *A. cantonensis* in the region and the high infestation rate of *A. fulica*, in addition to continuing the collections and parasitological examinations, health agents will also receive training for recognition of the species, control measures, and public education efforts. Furthermore, a health education project will be implemented to raise awareness among residents in the affected areas aiming to prevent infection and spread of EoM.

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