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Discovery of the predatory mite *Neoseiulus californicus* (Acari: Phytoseiidae) in some rose greenhouses in Iran and describing variation in spermathecal calyx shape

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*Neoseiulus californicus* (McGregor, 1954) is a predatory mite in temperate and subtropical regions around the world (Fraulo *et al.* 2008; Demite *et al.* 2016) and is commercially reared to control spider mites (Jolly 2000; Easterbrook *et al.* 2001). The outdoor populations of this predatory mite have been reported from many countries with warm temperature (Demite *et al.* 2016). Close to Iran, in neighbouring Turkey, it was found in an area close to the Aegean Sea with mild winter temperature (Çakmak and Çobanoğlu 2006) and Syria at Latakia, close to the Mediterranean Sea (Barbar 2014). Although different biological attributes of this predatory mite were evaluated under laboratory conditions in Iran (e.g. Rahmani *et al.* 2009; Rezaie 2015; Rezaie & Montazerie 2015; Khanamani *et al.* 2016), its occurrence was not reported from greenhouses or open fields. In the present study, for the first time, we document discovery of the predatory mite *N. californicus* in some rose greenhouses in Yasouj, Iran. Furthermore, variation in spermathecal calyx shape is also discussed.

Mite specimens were collected from some rose greenhouses in Yasouj, Iran. Rose leaves were detached and placed in plastic bags. In the laboratory of the Department of Plant Protection, Faculty of Agriculture, Yasouj University, predatory mites were collected using a camel hairbrush under a dissecting microscope and preserved in 70% ethanol. The specimens were cleared in lactophenol and mounted in Hoyer's medium on microscope slides, individually. Photos were taken with the aid of a digital camera attached to an Olympus phase contrast microscope.

*Mite material examined: Two females and one male, 12 April 2016, col.: S. Seyedizadeh, Chenarestan village, Yasouj, Iran.*

*Neoseiulus californicus* was introduced to Iran just for academic research (e.g. Khanamani *et al.* 2016; Maroufpoor *et al.* 2016) and not for use in pest management programs. The rearing cultures were initiated by purchasing *N. californicus* from Koppert Biological System, The Netherlands in 2009 and 2012. It is more likely that the populations of this predatory mite establishing themselves in some Iranian greenhouses originated from any of the university laboratory cultures. Since the average low temperature of Yasouj is about −2 °C, this predatory mite can survive the mild freezing wintertime and establish its population outdoor. The same climate condition or even milder winter exists in many other parts of Iran and we expect to face a widespread distribution of *N. californicus.*
in Iran in near future. Unlike introduction of an unwanted pest, we consider the occurrence of this precious predatory mite in the Iranian greenhouses and in the fields a benefit for the biological control programs against spider mites. Based on our finding, we add this record to the mite fauna of Iran and recommend the authorities to lift any restrictions for shipment or augmentation of *N. californicus* in Iran.

**Figure 1.** Some features of *Neoseiulus californicus* (female): A. Sternal shield; B. Genital shield; C. Ventrianal shield; D. Posterior part of dorsal shield; E. Basitarsus leg IV; F. Chelicera; G, H & I. Variation in spermathecal calyx shape.

In this paper, we follow Athias-Henriot (1977) for the identification of *N. californicus sensu lato*. Xu *et al.* (2013) has recently reviewed the taxonomical status of *N. californicus*, re-described it
and clarified some mistakes in the literature. The features of the collected mites (Fig. 1: A–I) in Iran fit well with those of the re-described species. Xu et al. (2013) documented the shape of spermathecal calyx for some strains of *N. californicus* and emphasized the Chinese strain having calyx slightly longer (L) than wide (W) (2:1.7). The specimens that we have collected in Iran do show a variation of calyx length from unusually longer (L:W, 2:1.3) (Fig. 1I) to equal in length (Fig. 1H).

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