

MENDEZ, E. 2000. *Insectos y otros artrópodos de importancia médica y veterinaria*. Privately published in Panama. vii + 341 p. ISBN 1-57504-023-9. Paperback. \$30.00 + \$5.00 postage and packing by registered airmail from Dr. E. Méndez, Apartado postal 870317, Zona 7, Panamá, REPUBLIC OF PANAMA.

This book is unique. Most books on “medical entomology” and “veterinary entomology” weight the space devoted to arthropod groups by the relative importance of the diseases transmitted to humans, livestock, and pet vertebrate animals by those arthropods. They are written from the viewpoint of training a medical or veterinary practitioner. Many of them thus fail to mention, or give little attention to, the arthropods that bite and sting or are otherwise venomous and cause problems for the health of humans, livestock, and pet animals. They emphasize the major vectors of disease (mosquitoes, ticks, triatomine bugs, fleas, and phlebotomine sandflies) and they almost ignore non-triatomine bugs, other families of flies, blister and other beetles, urticating caterpillars, poisonous spiders, millipedes, centipedes, scorpions, wasps, ants, bees, and pentastomids. This book is instead a natural history of the arthropod groups that have any implication for “medical” and “veterinary” entomology as well as some of their relatives. It is written from the entomological, rather than medico-veterinary, perspective. From the medico-veterinary perspective, the diseases transmitted by arthropods are what matters, and diagnosis and treatment of the diseases are the stock-in-trade, so that knowledge about the arthropods is a minor part of diagnosis (and may fail), although it necessarily is a major part of prevention (and this is where the typical medico-veterinary training may be inadequate). From the entomological perspective, the appropriate training of a “complete medical entomologist” begins with general entomology, progresses to the identification, behavior, natural history, and control methods for all arthropods having any implication for the health and welfare of vertebrate animals (including humans), and finally concentrates on arthropods that transmit diseases and imparts knowledge of the diseases and their ethiology. This book’s author presents his information from the latter viewpoint.

An argument for this latter viewpoint is a recent medical diagnosis of an affliction to the hand of the wife of a friend. The initial medical diagnosis was that she had been

bitten by a recluse spider (*Loxosceles* sp.). Fortunately, she obtained a second opinion which was of a blood clot plus shingles. If the initial examining physician had been better informed about the distribution of recluse spiders, through a book similar to this one, the initial erroneous diagnosis could have been avoided, appropriate treatment could have commenced earlier, and the patient would have been in less danger of gangrene!

This book is written from its author's experience of arthropods in Panama because he was for many years an employee of the Gorgas Memorial Hospital. It includes also examples from other continents. It is written in Spanish. The habitus illustrations are the author's own work, and they are very well executed. This book deserves wide circulation in Latin America, where it is highly relevant. There is, unfortunately, no comparable book in English: entomologists, physicians and veterinarians have to use one of the existing books on medical or veterinary entomology, few of which give much coverage of non-disease-transmitting arthropods, and these professionals are therefore left floundering for want of adequate information. The September 2000 issue of *Florida Entomologist* has reviews of books on "medical entomology", none of them comparable to this one. I am not aware of comparable books on "veterinary entomology."

This book is completed by a glossary, references cited, and an index. It has some typographical errors. Some of the information, such as claims that *Amblyopinus* and other genera of Amblyopinina (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae) are ectoparasites of rodents (p. 192), is no longer considered correct.

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