Correspondence

*Dermacentor auratus* Supino, 1897 (Acarina, Ixodidae) reported from Wayanad, Kerala

Sir,


A male labourer working at College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Pookot, Wayanad, Kerala, reported on February 20, 2009 about an attachment of tick on his leg while he was returning from his home through the college campus, which shares its boundary with the reserve forest. Bite had occurred only a few minutes back so the tick could be removed gently without damaging the mouth parts. The specimen was observed under a stereozoom microscope (Labomed, India) for species identification and photographed.

The removed single tick was identified as male *D. auratus* Supino, 1897 (Acarina, Ixodidae). Size of the tick was 7mm (length from capitulum to middle festoon) x 5mm (maximum breadth at its mid length). Scutum, capitulum and legs were highly ornate. Hypostome was short, spatulate, with a dentition of 3/3. A pair of eyes was present at the level of second coxae. More or less raised brown base colour markings characteristic of *D. auratus* were present on the dorsal scutum (Fig. 1a). Large punctuation interspersed by minute ones was noticed on the dorsal aspect of scutum.
while these were not observed on the brown raised areas. Festoons contained 11 bulges. On the ventral side, coxae increased in size from I to IV (Fig. 1b), which is also a typical characteristic of *Dermacentor* spp. Palps were longer than basis capitulum, spiracular plates were ovate with a short narrow tail; external and internal spurs of coxa I were well separated.

There are 30 species of *Dermacentor* reported from all over the world, of which only three *viz.*, *D. atrosignatus*, *D. auratus*, *D. raskemensis* occur in India. *D. auratus* has been recorded from hosts like man, cattle, deer, buffalo, wild boar and small mammals in different States of the country like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Orissa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Wild pigs, deer, and possibly the python are reported to be the host for adults. Wild pigs, deer, buffalo, wild boar and small mammals in different States of the country like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Orissa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. *D. auratus* adult male is perhaps the first record of bite of a human being by an adult male *D. auratus* from Kerala.

*D. auratus* has already been reported to carry many rickettsiae and viruses. *Anaplasma* sp. strain AnDa465, a genotype of *Anaplasma platys* and *Rickettsia* sp. strain RDla420 were detected from these ticks collected from dogs and bear respectively. *D. auratus* was also identified to carry Kyasanur forest disease (KFD) virus which causes a fatal zoonotic viral disease reported from KFD region of Karnataka.

Wild pigs, deer, and possibly the python are reported to be the host for adults. Bite of a nymphal stage of *D. auratus* on the upper eyelid of a man has been previously reported from Kolkata. Man is frequently infected by nymphs of these ticks. But in the present case, the bite was due to an adult tick on man. Spread of this tick might have occurred from *D. auratus* prevalent Kyasanur forest and surrounding area of Karnataka State to the neighboring district Wayanad of Kerala due to migration of wildlife or transportation of livestock.

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**References**


**Fig. 2.** Distribution of *D. auratus* and Kyasanur forest disease (KFD) in India [Source: Refs 6-8 and present report].