

# **INFESTATION RATE OF HEAD LICE IN PUPILS OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN INNER MONGOLIA REGION, CHINA**

Xiaoye Yang<sup>1</sup>, Ying Yang<sup>1</sup> & Steve Barker<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *College of Animal Science and Animal Medicine, Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, Huhhot 010018, China*

<sup>2</sup> *Department of Microbiology and Parasitology, The University of Queensland, QLD 4072, Brisbane, Australia*

The head lice infestation is a serious problem of school-aged children in many countries. *Pediculus humanus capitis* lives on the hair and scalp of persons and causes intensely uncomfortable feelings in physiology and psychology. Although the infestation rates have been reported in different countries, no data are available in China. The present study aimed to determine the prevalence of infestation with head lice in pupils in the urban and rural primary schools in Inner Mongolia Region, China. Two primary schools were selected for this study, which are respectively located in the urban of Baotou city (3 classes, including to a preschool class) and the rural village of Wumeng area (2 classes). Overall, 165 children, who largely come from the young families with limited financial resources and bad living hygiene conditions, were examined for head lice. The hair and scalp of each child were checked using a comb with a steel fine tooth wiped onto white papers by naked eyes and a hand lens for the presence of nymphs and adults of lice during the period of April to May 2001. The infestation rate of total 165 children was 9.1%(15/165) in average. Head lice were more prevalent in girls than boys, giving 8.2% in 98 boys whereas 10.4% in 67 girls. The prevalence of infestation varied greatly between urban area and rural area, which were 0% and 25% respectively. A hyperendemic level was present in a rural primary school. The infective intensity was from 1 to 29, averagely about 10 lice.

The result indicates that infestation of head lice in pupils was also existed in some rural areas in China. We should do more research work about it. It suggests that educational programs for parents are needed to increase the sensitivity of detection of head lice for their children. Schools may have to recognize that they can play a more active role in the control of pediculosis capitis.