

The European common hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) – a parasitic tabula rasa

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The European common hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) is a synanthropic species occurring in the central steppes of Eurasia. It is widespread in many European countries, but has recently become a rare species or has disappeared completely. As its population has fallen in Poland, it is under strict protection. This population decline is linked, among others, to the development of modern monocultural agriculture and habitat fragmentation. Knowledge of the parasites affecting this species is negligible. These studies are part of a larger project concerning an inventory of the habitat of hamster in the Małopolska province.

In 2016, a total of six individuals of *Cricetus cricetus* were autopsied: three adult males and three females (one old and two young). The animals died in road accidents (three cases) or were killed by man (one was poisoned and two killed by beating) in 2015. The study investigated the internal organs and parts of the gastrointestinal tract (the stomach, small intestine, caecum and large intestine) of the hamsters.

Two female hamsters (one young and one old) were infected with a tapeworm (*Andrya* sp.) from the Anoplocephalidae family. The parasites were present in the small intestine, three specimens were found in one animal and two in the other. Nematodes from *Heligmosomoides* genus were found in three hamsters: 87 specimens in one adult male in the small intestine, two in the colon of the other adult male and five in the colon of the young female. Research in this area will continue.

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