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ANTIBODIES ANTI-SALIVA OF *LUTZOMYIA LONGIPALPIS* AMONG DOGS AND THE CRAB-EATING FOX *CERDOCYON THOUS* CAPTURED IN A HIGHLY ENDEMIC AREA OF TRANSMISSION OF *LEISHMANIA CHAGASI*.

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Introduction: Although found naturally infected with *Leishmania chagasi*, the crab-eating fox *Cerdocyon thous* has not been described yet in contact with *Lutzomyia longipalpis*, the sand fly vector of *L. chagasi*. The presence of antibodies anti-*Lu. longipalpis* saliva would indicate a natural contact among foxes and *Lu. longipalpis*. **Objective:** To evaluate the presence of antibodies anti-saliva of *Lu. longipalpis* in wild foxes from an endemic area of visceral leishmaniasis. **Material and methods:** Sera of nine foxes and of six dogs living in the same area in the environs of Teresina, a highly endemic city for visceral leishmaniasis, was tested for the presence of antibodies against the whole saliva gland of *Lu. longipalpis* and *Lu. whitmani* by using an immunoenzymatic assay (ELISA) and conjugates with protein A. Antibodies anti-*L. chagasi* were tested by ELISA and by indirect immunofluorescence test (IFAT). Negative controls were recently born dogs from Salvador-BA, an area where transmission of *L. chagasi* does not occurs. **Results:** All dogs and 8/9 foxes had higher absorbance for anti-*Lu. longipalpis* antibodies and none had any evidence for anti-*Lu. whitmani* saliva antibodies. No animal foxes had anti-*L. chagasi* antibodies but the only one sick fox had amastigotes in the bone marrow. **Conclusions:** The present description for the first time establish a link between the fox *C. thous* and the vector of *L. chagasi*, the sand fly *Lu. longipalpis*. The force of contact was similar to dogs which lives in close contact with domiciliary vectors. The absence of reaction against the saliva of the locally found *Lu. whitmani* indicates the species-specific reaction. This finding together with the description of *Lu. longipalpis* from fox dens suggests that the contact may occur inside the animal caves. The presence of one infected fox suggests that a natural foci of transmission of *L. chagasi* may exist inside foxes dens.

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