

Forensic Entomology in Algeria

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Abstract : Forensic entomology is the use of insects and their arthropod relatives as silent witnesses to aid legal investigations by interpreting information concerning a death. The main purpose of forensic entomology is to establish the postmortem interval or PMI. Postmortem interval is a matter of crucial importance in the investigations of homicide and other untimely deaths when the body found is after three days. Forensic entomology has grown immensely as a discipline in the past thirty years. In Algeria, forensic entomology was introduced in 2010 by the National Institute for Criminalistics and Criminology of the National Gendarmerie (NICC). However, all the work that has been done so far in this growing field in Algeria has been unknown at both the national and international levels. In this context, the aim of this paper is to describe the state of forensic entomology in Algeria. The Laboratory of Entomology of the NICC is the only one of its kind in Algeria. It started its activities in 2010, consisting of two specialists. The main missions of the laboratory are estimation of the PMI by the analysis of entomological evidence, and determination if the body was moved. Currently, the laboratory is performing different tasks such as the expert work required by investigators to estimate the PMI using the insects. The estimation is performed by the accumulated degree days method (ADD) in most of the cases except for those where the cadaver is in dry decay. To assure the quality of the entomological evidence, crime scene personnel are trained by the laboratory of Entomology of the NICC. Recently, undergraduate and graduate students have been studying carrion ecology and insect activity in different geographic locations of Algeria using rabbits and wild boar cadavers as animal models. The Laboratory of Entomology of the NICC has also been involved in some of these research projects. Entomotoxicology experiments are also conducted with the collaboration of the Toxicology Department of the NICC. By dint of hard work that has been performed by the Laboratory of Entomology of the NICC, official bodies have been adopting more and more the use of entomological evidence in criminal investigations in Algeria, which is commendable. It is important, therefore, that steps are taken to fill in the gaps in the knowledge necessary for entomological evidence to have a useful future in criminal investigations in Algeria.

Keywords : forensic entomology, corpse, insects, postmortem interval, expertise, Algeria

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