



ISoP Newsletter October 2020

Apologies to all that I have not written anything earlier this year, and I certainly did not forget to. I hope you are all well and that none of you, including your families and colleagues, have not been personally affected by Covid-19. Fortunately, we have had relatively few cases in our area and, although we know of colleagues and former colleagues who have caught the virus, none of them has been badly affected, although a 90+ year old former colleague is less active than he was prior to catching it.

No doubt every one of you has been under some kind of lockdown at some point during this year and we have found that even where no lockdown has occurred that activity in relation to insects has been a lower priority than usual.

This does not mean that the insects have retired, and earlier this year there was some debate about whether coronavirus infections would affect human head louse transmission. With schools closed, and online learning widespread, there was a suspicion that lice would not have the opportunities to spread.

Certainly, we did not receive as many as normal calls from some of our regular contacts seeking help with infestations, but that was probably a false dawn. Visits to the supermarkets and pharmacies showed shelves full of head louse treatments, suggesting that nobody was buying and using them. Or was it just that nobody was looking for lice because the kids were not at school so they thought lice would not get about?

In our local schools, where they still operated for children from vulnerable groups and for offspring of key workers, it was quite clear on casual observation that the planned “social distancing” of kids to avoid virus transmission was not working. The few children attending

were just as much in contact with each other, as the staff members stood about in a group chatting (not socially distanced either!).

It was only as the lockdowns relaxed and people started thinking about getting back to normal that the reality of the situation showed up. Whole families were finding they were infested, where in the past it was mostly the children. So at this stage all household members were finding they had lice, because they had taken them into lockdown with themselves. Furthermore, the social isolations had not been as rigid as politicians had intended so that some households had allowed children to play together clandestinely and this mixing had carried on something similar to the normal epidemiology of the lice. The result, coronavirus has had little impact overall on head louse prevalence, and now the kids are back at school the lousey life continues as normal.

Publications

I have been collecting publications again, as previously, and the list for 2019 is more complete for the period covered than normal. However, there were fewer papers published during 2019, with only 164 papers on human and animal/bird lice and 26 on other Psocodea coming to light so far. I have also included some publications missed during 2108.

As with last year there is a suffix to each of the listings “*pdf available”, which means I have managed to find a free to access download of the article if anyone needs it.

Let us hope that 2021 proves to be a better year than this one.

Best wishes to all

Ian