Nezygites sminthuri sp. nov. (Zygomycetes, Entomophthorales), a pathogen of the springtail Sminthurus viridis L. (Collembola, Sminthuridae)

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Nezygites sminthuri is described as a new species. The spherical hyphal bodies measure 12.1–14.6 μm and contain 4, rarely 3 nuclei. The conidiophores are unbranched and produce a single conidium. The primary conidia measure 13.2–14.5 × 8.2–10.0 μm. Secondary conidia resembling the primary ones are produced on short, thick secondary conidiophores. Capilliconidia and resting spores were not found, but the fungal structures observed allow the inclusion of this species in the genus Nezygites.

Keywords: Insect pathogens, taxonomy, morphology, Nezygites, Collembola, Sminthurus, lucerne.

Fungal pathogens have only rarely been recorded from springtails (Visser & al., 1987; Balazy, 1993). An entomophthoralean fungus (Zygomycetes: Entomophthorales), however, was recently found in populations of the lucerne flea Sminthurus viridis L. (Collembola: Sminthuridae) in Denmark. Fungus infected specimens of S. viridis were collected at three sites in the western and in the eastern part of Denmark. The fungus was recorded in two consecutive seasons and only infected a small proportion of the host population (Steenberg & al., 1996).

The fungus was identified as a hitherto unknown species of Neozygites Witlaczil (1885). This genus comprises species with relatively narrow host ranges, all of which have been found in small arthropods such as aphids (Homoptera), thrips (Thysanoptera) and mites (Acari) (Keller, 1991). This new species of Neozygites infecting springtails is described here.

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Materials and methods

Live samples of *S. viridis* were collected by sweep netting in lucerne fields during July and August. The specimens were transferred to humid chambers (30 ml plastic vials containing a leaf of lucerne embedded in a layer of water agar) and incubated for 7 days. During this time, some of them succumbed to the fungus, falling to the bottom of the vials.

The fungus material was mounted in lactophenol cotton blue (LPCB) or lactophenol aceto orcein (LPAO, 0.5% orcein) as described by Keller (1987). All measurements and counts were based, if not otherwise stated, on 50 objects per individual host, designated as one series. The number of series investigated is given after the range of the mean values, the extreme values (in brackets) and eventually the ratio length/diameter (L/D). Measurements of fungal structures are rounded to 1 μm, those of nuclear diameters to 0.5 μm.

Results

*Neozygites sminthuri* S. Keller & Steenberg sp. nov. – Pl. 1, Figs. 1–8.

Corpora hyphalia sphaerica vel subsphaerica (11-)12-15(-17) μm, 4 nucleis diametro 2.5-3 μm praedita. Conidiophora simplicia. Conidia primaria (12-)13.5-14.5(-16) × (6-)8-10(-12) μm, ovoidea vel pyriformia. Conidia secundaria primariis similis, 11-13 × 7-10 μm. Rhizoidea, cystidia, capilliconidia et sporae perdurantes absunt.

In *Sminthuro viridi* L. (Collembola, Sminthuridae) (Hospite typico).


Host. – Collembola, Sminthuridae: *Sminthurus viridis* L. (type species).

Etymology of specific epithet. – Suggesting the host from which the fungus was collected.

Rhizoids absent. – Hyphal bodies spherical, 12.1-14.6 μm (11-17 μm) (3 series), sometimes slightly subspherical, containing 4, rarely 3 nuclei measuring 2.7-2.8 μm (2.5-3 μm) (3 series), germinating with single germ tube. – Conidiophores unbranched. – Primary conidia 13.2-14.5 × 8.2-10.0 μm (12-16 × 6-12 μm), L/D = 1.43-1.66 (5 series); ovoid to pyriform, apex rounded, papilla rounded, rarely flat; diameter of the papilla 6.1 (5-7) μm (1 series, n = 25). – Secondary conidia similar to the primary ones, 11.8 × 8.7 μm.

(11-13 × 7-10 µm), L/D = 1.35 (1 series, n=25), produced on a short, thick germ tube. - *Capillitconidia, cystidia and resting spores* not observed.

**Distribution.** - Taastrup (eastern Zealand) (type location), Aagerup (Zealand), Barde (western Jutland).
Discussion

The species is incompletely known. Although many host specimens were examined no capilliconidia or resting spores were found. Nevertheless, the fungal structures present are typical for the genus *Neozygites*, especially the structure and size of the nuclei. Nearly all hyphal bodies, conidiophores and primary conidia examined contained 4 nuclei. From $3 \times 50$ hyphal bodies only 2–6% contained 3 nuclei. Less than 3 or more than 4 nuclei were never found.

This is the first well documented case of an entomophthoralean fungus attacking an apterygote insect. Balazy (1993) mentioned a collection from Poland of *Erynia curvispora* on the Collembola *Podura* sp. floating on the water surface. Beside this isolated record this species is known only from Diptera: *Nematocera*, mainly belonging to the families Chironomidae and Simuliidae (Balazy, 1993; Keller, 1991). Since the Entomophthorales are known for their host specificity, the record of *E. curvispora* on Collembola must be considered doubtful and is in need of confirmation.

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References


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