

Biting midges (Diptera, Ceratopogonidae: *Culicoides*) in rural areas of Porto Velho Municipality, Rondônia State, Brazilian Western Amazon

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Culicoides are small dipteran insects with medical and veterinary importance, due to the hematophagous behavior of the females. Some species can transmit Bluetongue Virus and Oropouche Virus to animals and humans, respectively, and those viruses are endemic in Brazil. There is very little information about *Culicoides* in the Brazilian Amazon basin, especially in the state of Rondônia, part of the economy of which is based on cattle production. The aim of this study was to evaluate the species composition of *Culicoides* in pastures and forests in Porto Velho, Rondônia. The collection locations of these insects were four farms: Sítio Bocaina, Sítio Pesque e Pague, Fazenda Rancho Colorado and Fazenda Careca. The captures were done with HP light traps during three nights (18:00-06:00) from March to May 2015. A total of 1,709 individuals (1,136 females and 573 males) belonging to 34 species were collected, of which 27 are new records for Rondônia, and this marks the first occurrence of *C. contubernalis* in Brazil. *Culicoides insignis* (86.1%) and *C. foxi* (2.6%) were the most abundant species. Species richness was greater in forest areas (33 - 97.05%) with *C. glabrior* and *C. insignis* being the most abundant species in this environment, while pastures presented the greatest number of *Culicoides* captured (1,540 - 90.1%). The most abundant species in the pastures were *C. insignis* (1,457-94%) and *C. ocumarensis* (14 – 2.0%). This study shows that the *Culicoides* population differs between forests and pastures and the abundance of *Culicoides insignis* is an important factor for epidemiological vigilance studies in the Amazon.

Keywords: Pastures, *Culicoides insignis*, arboviruses, Rondônia.