

Daily Consumption and Predation Rate of Different *Stethorus punctillum* Instars Feeding on *Tetranychus urticae*

V.S. Ragkou,¹ C.G. Athanassiou,² N.G. Kavallieratos*,³ and Ž. Tomanović⁴

Laboratory experiments were conducted to evaluate the prey stage preference and the daily consumption of each stage of the coccinellid predator *Stethorus punctillum* Weise (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae) feeding on the two-spotted spider mite *Tetranychus urticae* (Koch) (Acari: Tetranychidae). Groups of different life stages of the prey were offered (eggs, larvae, nymphs and adults). The prey preference varied with the stage of *S. punctillum*. First larval instars had no significant preference among the *T. urticae* stages offered. Second larval instars consumed significantly more spider mite larvae in comparison with nymphs. In contrast, third larval instars indicated a strong preference for mite eggs. Significantly fewer *T. urticae* larvae were consumed by the fourth larval instars of *S. punctillum*, in comparison with the three other mite stages. Finally, adult predators consumed significantly more mite eggs than the other stages offered. This preferential trend was similar for all adults tested, whether during the pre-oviposition or the oviposition period.

KEY WORDS: *Stethorus punctillum*; *Tetranychus urticae*; daily consumption; prey stage preference.

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¹Dept. of Agricultural Sciences, Imperial at Wye, Wye, Ashford, Kent TN25 5AH, UK.

²Laboratory of Agricultural Zoology and Entomology, Faculty of Plant Science, Agricultural University of Athens, 11855 Athens, Greece.

³Laboratory of Agricultural Entomology, Dept. of Entomology & Agricultural Zoology, Benaki Phytopathological Institute, 14561 Kifissia, Attica, Greece. *Corresponding author [e-mail: nick_kaval@hotmail.com; esimou@aua.gr].

⁴Institute of Zoology, Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro.