

In Europe, findings of "exotic" ticks are being reported more and more often, because thermophilic ticks find here now optimal conditions for survival and completion of life cycle with climate warming. Among these tick species are understudied **ticks of the genus *Hyalomma* ('Monster tick')**. Thousands of *Hyalomma* larvae and nymphs come to Europe and Poland every year during the spring migration of birds. So far, ticks were not able to survive due to low temperature and high humidity. However, warm and dry springs/summer have contributed to the appearance and attacks of adult *Hyalomma* ticks on humans and animals, e.g. in Germany (including Berlin), the Czech Republic, Slovakia and even Sweden.

Ticks were collected there from horses, dogs, cattle and even found in homes. Due to the lack of such studies in Poland, we are planning three-year monitoring of locations selected in terms of optimal environmental conditions for *Hyalomma* ticks to check and map the occurrence of these ticks. Additionally, we plan to include all interested society members in our research - by participating in the **citizen science project: 'Monster tick: nation-wide tick collection'**. In this project public members can share their observations of unusual ticks with scientists and send the ticks for examination at our research center. Citizen science projects enable a much wider range of research and provide unique results. Despite the successes of similar projects on ticks in many countries, such projects have not yet been implemented in Poland.

The presence of *Hyalomma* ticks can pose a serious threat to human health, as **this genus of tick is the carrier (vector) of the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever virus (CCHFV). Fatality rate among CCHFV-infected persons is usually high (10-60%)** and causal treatment is unavailable. In this project, we plan to test the collected *Hyalomma* ticks for the presence of the CCHF virus and for the presence of other relevant pathogens (*Anaplasma*, *Babesia*, *Rickettsia*). To determine the genetic variants of the virus, we plan to test an appropriate number of *Hyalomma* ticks from endemic regions: southern Mongolia and Iraq, where numerous cases of CCHF in humans are recorded every year.

In conclusion, our study will 1) provide the first data on the spread/occurrence of *Hyalomma* ticks in Poland; 2) determine the prevalence of infection with CCHF virus and other pathogens in *Hyalomma* ticks collected in 'European' and endemic regions and 3) involve the society members in a scientific project, resulting in the dissemination of useful knowledge about the occurrence and prevention of tick-borne diseases.