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Ticks from migratory birds as possible route to spread Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic fever virus: preliminary data about species composition from three Italian islands

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Migratory birds have been known to be passive carriers of arthropod vectors of various pathogens. A study to assess the potential role of migratory birds, which are tick-carriers, as a possible route to spread the Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever Virus (CCHFV) into Europe was initiated in 2017 by the Italian Ministry of Health. The CCHFV is the etiological agent responsible for a serious zoonosis and endemic disease in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and some European countries including Balkan countries, Turkey and Greece.

Ticks were collected from birds during seasonal bird ringing activities in Mediterranean islands known to be stop-over sites for migratory birds from Africa or from East Europe and Turkey. Identification of tick specimens, in particular, *Hyalomma* specimens (which represent a species rich genus found on migratory birds), was based on morphological studies and in case of immature stages, on molecular techniques. The presence or absence of CCHFV from each tick was confirmed by processing each specimen by molecular tools.

In total, more than 700 ticks were collected. The preliminary data on ticks collected in Spring of 2017 from birds as well as from the ground around the same sites of the ringing activities are reported in this communication. The collection sites were the island of Ventotene (Lazio Region), island of Ustica (Sicily Region) and island of Asinara (Sardinia Region).

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