SURVIVAL AND POPULATION BUILD UP OF THE PSOCID (BOOK LOUSE) *LIPOSCELIS BOSTRYCHOPHILUS* (PSOCOPTERA: LIPOSCELIDAE) IN BLACK TEA AND OTHER MEDIA

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Investigations were undertaken to study contamination with psocids (book lice, *Liposcelis bostrychophilus*) and their survival in different categories of tea, including fresh black tea (with less than 7% moisture content), mouldy tea (with more than 15% moisture content) and tea sweepings (with a moisture content of about 7% and with a high content of dirt). The population dynamics of this insect in the above media was compared with that of in wheat flour, wheat starch, brewer's yeast and glucose, all of which were inoculated with a known number of insects and maintained under controlled conditions (24°C ± 1°C and 75%RH). Insect counts were taken at fortnightly intervals, over a period of 12 weeks.

These insects were found to increase in number rapidly only in mouldy tea, whilst the survival and population rise in tea sweepings was low. Survival in fresh tea was very poor with no increase in population. The population rise in wheat flour was high as in mouldy tea. Glucose and brewer's yeast were observed to be poor media, whilst wheat starch sustained high populations.

Warehouses with damp conditions and in which blending of tea is carried out on the floor were obvious sources of contamination. Tea sweepings from factories were seldom found contaminated. The presence of an appreciable number of psocids in tea (over 200/kg) appears to be an indicator of high moisture content and mouldiness or a high content of dirt and consequently tea packed under poor hygienic conditions is likely to be contaminated with these insects.