

PAEDERUS ALTERNANS WALKER, A STAPHYLINID BEETLE
CAUSING DERMATITIS IN KELANIYA

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Outbreaks of vesicular dermatitis is known to occur periodically among residents of Bandaranayake Hall, a students' hostel of Kelaniya University, from about April to July each year. Persons affected give a history of skin irritation and redness of the affected area prior to the appearance of pin head sized blisters with yellowish fluid, which dry up in 6 to 7 days. Blisters appear in an irregular patch or in a row and sometimes form mirror images on areas of skin touching each other when limbs are flexed. The seasonality of occurrence and the mirror image lesions suggested the possible involvement of an insect. Therefore, during an outbreaks various insects were hand collected from the hostel rooms and examined for possible candidates. Among them was a Staphylinid beetle, *Paederus alternans walker.

This beetle is 5-6 mm in length. Its head, elytra and tip of abdomen are black while the rest of the body is bright orange.

Several species belonging to the Genus Paederus are known to cause dermatitis in S. America, S. & E Africa, Java, Australia and Japan (Mc Crae & Visser, 1975). By smearing crushed P.alternans beetles on human skin it was confirmed that the dermatitis under consideration is caused by this beetle.

*Identified by R. Madage of the Commonwealth institute of Entomology.

References: Mc Crae A.W.R. and Visser S.A. (1975) Paederus
(Coleoptera: Staphylinidae in Uganda.
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