

COMPARATIVE ULTRASTRUCTURE OF THREE LIZARD ERYTHROCYTIC VIRUSES

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KEYWORDS: erythrocytic virus, iridovirus, lizard, ultrastructure

Lizard erythrocytic viruses morphologically similar to iridoviridae were found in *Podarcis hispanica*, *Lacerta monticola* and *Lacerta schreiberi* from Portugal. Infected animals from the three species can be found in the same geographic area (Serra da Estrela), and experimental infections show that they can cross the species barrier. In this work we compared the ultrastructure of the three viruses and of the infected cells from field infected animals and from experimentally inoculated animals.

The virions show significant morphological differences in size and internal structure. The viroplasm display a similar organisation, but differ in details of the inclusions found within them. Dense strands in the cytoplasm and accumulation of microtubule-like structures seem to be specific to *Podarcis hispanica* and *Lacerta schreiberi* infections respectively. Infected cells show similar degenerative changes but in *Podarcis hispanica* they have small cytoplasmic crystalloids resembling *Toddia* inclusions.

Our results demonstrate that different species harbour different viruses, but the possibility of infection of several species by each virus in the field can not be ruled out.