Check List the journal of biodiversity data

NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Check List 17 (2): 719–722
https://doi.org/10.15560/17.2.719

PENSOFT

# First report of *Atherigona reversura* Villeneuve, 1936 (Diptera, Muscidae) in Uruguay

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**Abstract**

We present the first record of *Atherigona reversura* Villeneuve, 1936 in Uruguay, from Pando, Canelones department a rural area used for livestock. *Atherigona reversura*, this muscid, commonly known as shoot-fly, is a significant pest of cereal crops throughout the Old World tropics and subtropics and its main host is Bermudagrass, *Cynodon dactylon* L.Pers., an exotic species which is widely distributed in South America and in Uruguay and has economic value as forage for livestock and is damaged by the feeding of *A. reversura* larvae.

**Keywords**

Bermudagrass Stem Maggot, crop pest, *Cynodon dactylon*, distribution

**Academic editor:** Alessandre Pereira-Colavite | Received 3 December 2020 | Accepted 15 April 2021 | Published 30 April 2021

**Citation:** Remedios-De León M, Patitucci Luciano D, Morelli E (2021) First report of *Atherigona reversura* Villeneuve, 1936 (Diptera, Muscidae) in Uruguay. Check List 17 (2): 719–722. https://doi.org/10.15560/17.2.719

## Introduction

The large muscid genus *Atherigona* Rondani, 1856 (Diptera, Muscidae), commonly known as shoot-flies, includes over 230 species, most of which are found in tropical and subtropical regions (Ribeiro et al. 2016). These flies are significant pests of cereal crops and are often the cause economic loss in agriculture (Pont and Magpayo 1995). The genus is divided into two subgenera: *Acritochaeta* Grimshaw, 1901, which contains mostly saprophagous species, and *Atherigona*, whose phytophagous larvae feed on a variety of wild and cultivated grasses (Skidmore 1985; Pont and Magpayo 1995; Savage 2016). Species of *Atherigona* are known pests of sorghum, rice, wheat, corn, and barley in the Oriental region (Pont and Magpayo 1995; McCullers 2012). In the Americas, only two introduced species are present: *Atherigona* (*Acritochaeta*) *orientalis* Schiner, 1868, with a distributional range from the southern USA to northeastern Argentina (de Carvalho et al. 2005), and *A.* (*Atherigona*) *reversura* Villeneuve, 1936, recently recorded from the North American continent (Hudson 2010) to South America (Patitucci et al. 2016; Ribeiro et al. 2016). In 2010, extensive damage to bermudagrass fields was observed in Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and Alabama (Hudson 2010). Additional reports from California and northern Mexico were confirmed in 2013, and now *A. reversura* (Bermudagrass Stem Maggot) can be found throughout much of the southeastern and south-central USA (McCullers 2012; Grzywacz et

al. 2013). In South America, the first occurrence of *A. reversura* in Argentina was recorded in Santa Isabel (Santa Fé) in December 2014, followed by almost simultaneous records in the provinces of Buenos Aires (April and May 2015) and Chaco (March 2015) (Patitucci et al. 2016). In Brazil, *A. reversura* larvae were found in April 2015 in three localities in the western region of the state of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil: Abelardo Luz, Palmitos, and Videira (Ribeiro et al. 2016). This species breeds mainly in Bermudagrass, *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers., although other host species of Poaceae have been reported, including crops such as *Echinochloa colona* (L.) Link, *Eleusine coracana* Gaertn., *Eriochloa procera* (Retz.) C.E.Hubb., *Sehima nervosum* (Rottl.) Stapf., *Sorghum bicolor* (L.) Moench, and *Zea mays* L. (Pont and Magpayo 1995). In tropical and subtropical regions, *Cynodon* grasses are very productive, adaptable to regional soil conditions, pest and disease tolerant, and therefore of great forage potential (Oliveira et al. 2000; Rodrigues et al. 2006). *Cynodon dactylon* has been introduced to all tropical and subtropical areas and is now common in grasslands, lawns, pastures, roadsides, sea-coast sandy dunes, irrigated land, and along rivers (Heuzé et al. 2015).. The presence of this weed makes it difficult for the preparation of sowings; it decreases crop yields, the quality of forage, and the persistence of sown grasslands (Pravia 2009). Damage to *C. dactylon* by larvae of *A. reversura* is frequently mistaken with stress, nutrient deficiency, Bermudagrass leaf spot, and leaf rust, which can result in discolored plant material (Baxter et al. 2014). The immature stages of *A. reversura* were described by Grzywacz et al. (2013). Eggs are deposited on leaves or stems, and feeding by the larvae results in the death of the top two or three leaves which become chlorotic and die, turning white or brown (Baxter et al. 2014; Knutson and Forrest 2019). Mature larvae are cream-colored and about 3 mm in length, and pupation occurs on the soil surface (Baxter et al. 2014). Many details of the life cycle of *A. reversura* have yet to be reported (Knutson and Forrest 2019). We report the first records of *A. reversura* in Uruguay.

## Methods

We collected *Atherigona reversura* in Pando, Canelones (Fig. 1), a rural area used for livestock, where the predominant vegetation is *C. dactylon* and small native trees, *Celtis tala* Gillet ex Planch. and *Schinus longifolia* (Lindl.) Speg. The average temperature in summer varies between 18 and 32 °C and in winter between 0 and 20 °C. Specimens were collected during the summer and winter seasons of 2018 and 2019 with van Someren-Rydon canopy traps prepared with chicken liver and banana. Four traps were placed: two in the shade and two in the sun, 50 m apart and 1 m above the ground. The traps were active for 48 hours. The specimens

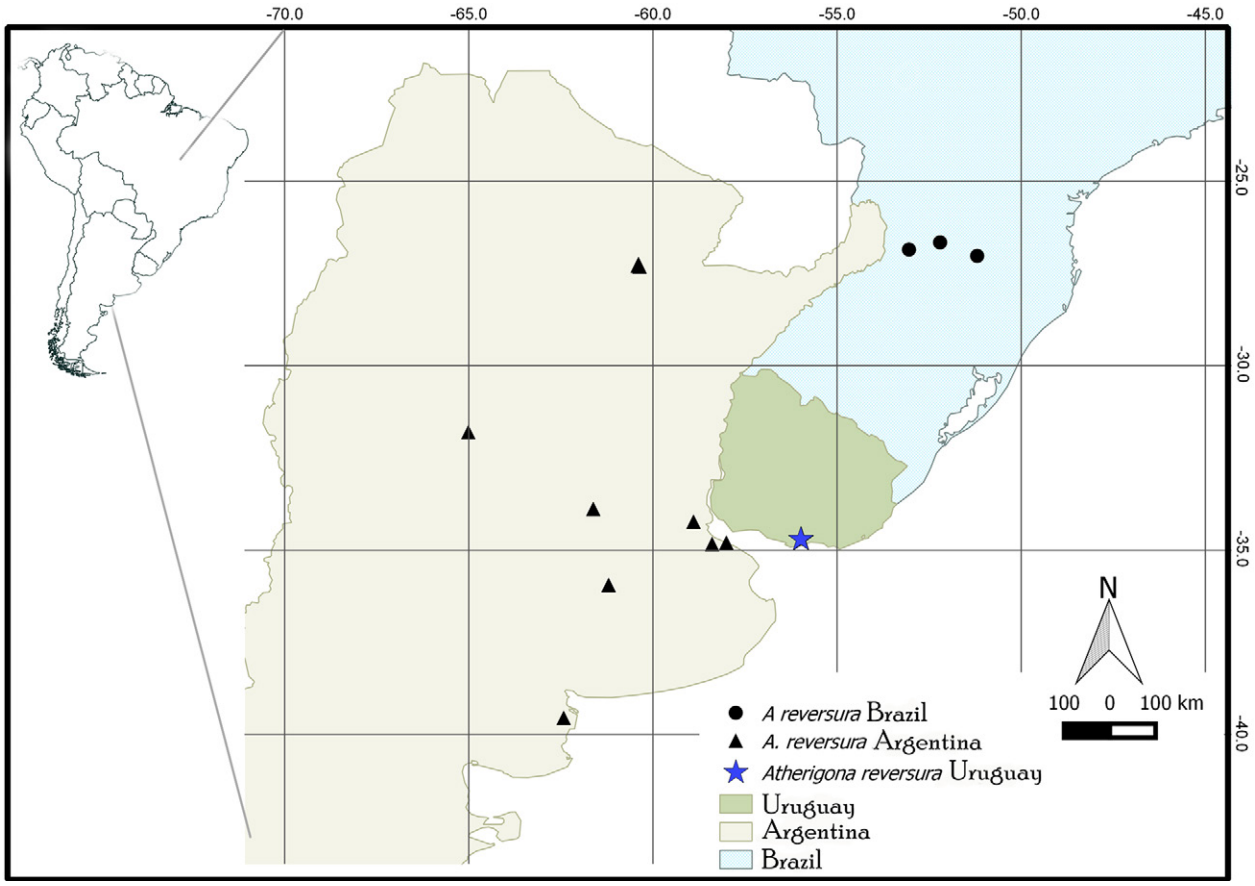


**Figure 1.** Geographic distribution of *Atherigona reversura* in Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil. Blue star = new record in Uruguay. Information on the previous records are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Known records of *A. reversura* in Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil.

| Country | Province | Location | Latitude | Longitude | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uruguay | Canelones | Pando | −34.7091 | −055.9746 | New record |
| Argentina | Buenos Aires | Villarino | −39.5434 | −062.4244 | Patitucci obs. pers |
| | Buenos Aires | Ensenada | −34.7996 | −058.0074 | Patitucci obs. pers |
| | Buenos Aires | — | −35.9440 | −061.2048 | Patitucci obs. pers. |
| | Buenos Aires | Burzaco | −34.8313 | −058.3950 | Patitucci et al. 2016 |
| | Buenos Aires | Campana | −34.2253 | −058.8988 | Patitucci et al. 2016 |
| | Santa Fé | Santa Isabel | −33.8794 | −061.6206 | Patitucci et al. 2016 |
| | Córdoba | San Andrés | −31.8003 | −065.0136 | Patitucci obs. pers. |
| | Chaco | Villa Berthet | −27.2482 | −060.3943 | Patitucci et al. 2016 |
| | Chaco | Villa Berthet | −27.3089 | −060.3650 | Patitucci et al. 2016 |
| | Chaco | Villa Berthet | −27.2903 | −060.4174 | Patitucci et al. 2016 |
| Brazil | Santa Catarina | Abelardo Luz | −26.6561 | −052.2047 | Ribeiro et al. 2016 |
| | Santa Catarina | Palmitos | −27.0719 | −053.1599 | Ribeiro et al. 2016 |
| | Santa Catarina | Videira | −27.0230 | −051.1980 | Ribeiro et al. 2016 |

collected were identified using the description by Villeneuve (1936) (Pont and Magpayo,1995). The terminology used for the external morphology follows Cumming and Wood (2017).

## Results

### *Atherigona reversura* Villeneuve, 1936

Figures 2, 3

**New records.** URUGUAY • Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −055.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 17 May 2018; M. Remedios-De León leg.; meat trap in shade; 001FCD, 2 ♂ • Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −055.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 17 May 2018; M. Remedios-De León leg.; meat trap in sun; 002FCD, 1 ♀ • Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −055.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 23 Dec. 2018; M. Remedios-De León leg.; banana trap in sun; 003FCD, 1 ♀ · Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −055.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 24 Feb. 2019; M. Remedios-De León leg.; meat trap in sun; 004FCD, 5 ♂ • Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −55.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 24 Feb. 2019; M. Remedios-De León leg.; meat trap in sun; 005FCD, 8 ♀ • Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −055.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 24 Feb. 2019; M. Remedios-De León leg.; meat trap in shade; 006FCD, 1 ♂ • Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −055.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 16 Mar. 2019; M. Remedios-De León leg.; banana trap in sun; 007FCD, 1 ♂ • Canelones department, Pando; −34.7091, −055.9746; 25 m a.s.l.; 16 Mar. 2019; M. Remedios-De León leg.; sun banana trap; 008FCD, 4 ♀.

**Identification.** Specimens were identified using taxonomic keys and descriptions provided by Pont and Magpayo (1995). To verify the identification, the male terminalia were compared with the literature (Pont and Magpayo 1995) and specimens collected in Argentina by Dr Patitucci and housed in the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales "Bernardino Rivadavia", Buenos Aires, Argentina.

*Atherigona reversura* (Fig. 2) is distinguished from other muscids due to their small size (3–5 mm), have

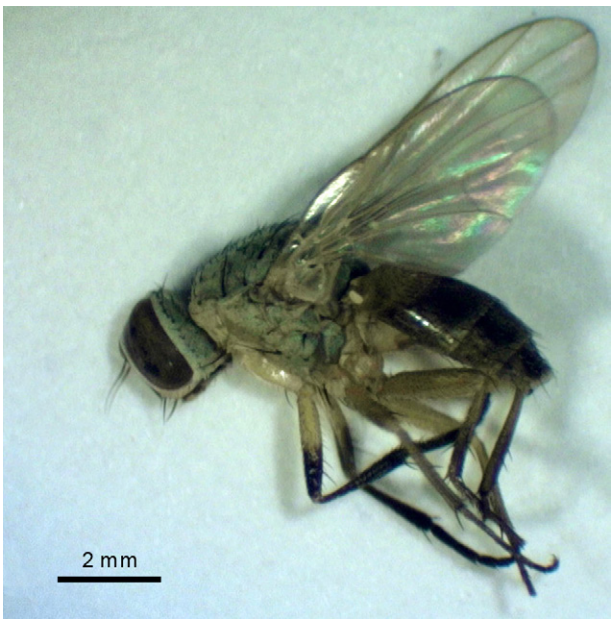


**Figure 2.** Male of *Atherigona reversura*, lateral view, from Pando, Canelones department (–34.7091. –055.9746), Uruguay.


**Figure 3.** Male of *Atherigona reversura*, lateroventral view of trifoliate process; from Pando, Canelones department (–34.7091, –055.9746).

angular head, with a long very sunken face and antennal postpedicel almost reaching lower facial margin in lateral view; arista bare; thoracic setae very reduced in size, prealar absent, acrostichal setae 0+1; katepisternals setae 1+2, lower one weaker, equidistant from the upper two; wing veins, except costa, bare; hind tibia without posterodorsal seta (calcar). Male and female have hyaline wings, a gray thorax, and a yellow abdomen with at least one pair of black spots. Female can be distinguished from male due to its longer and sharper abdomen in contrast to the male's which is short and round (Pont and Magpayo 1995).

Adult males and females have hyaline wings with the r-m cross vein in the basal half of the dm cell and before the intersection of the subcostal vein in the costal vein. Gray thorax and yellow abdomen with at least a couple of black spots. Males can be recognized by the bicolor frontal palp with enlarged tip, tarsomeres with elongated hairs, and genitalia with a trifoliate process present (Fig. 3).

## Discussion

Knutson and Forrest (2019) showed that the lesions formed by larvae of *A. reversura* in Bermudagrass significantly impact the performance of this plant. Currently, there are no recommended sampling methods to evaluate the presence and abundance of *A. reversura* larvae in crops and forage (; Baxter et al. 2014).

Our study documents the first records of *A. reversura* in Uruguay and contributes to the expands the known geographical distribution of this species in South America. Studies of this kind, as well as those of Patitucci et al. (2016) in Argentina and Ribeiro et al. (2016) in Brazil, contribute important information useful in the control of this pest in the region. We encourage South American countries to monitor this species carefully because of its importance as an agricultural pest.

## Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to the writing of the article. MRDL collected the specimens. LDP and MRDL identified the species. MRDL took the photographs. LDP and EM reviewed the document.

## Acknowledgements

We thank the Basic Sciences Education Program for financial support to MRDL and the reviewers for their valuable contributions.

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