Estimation of age-dependent survival rates of female tsetse flies (Diptera: Glossinidae) from ovarian age distributions

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Abstract

Existing attempts to estimate the survival rate of tsetse flies from ovarian age distributions generally assume that the population is stationary. The fact that the survival rate cannot be dissociated from the growth rate by these methods poses a problem. Under the assumption of a stable age distribution, we propose a maximum likelihood method to estimate the 'apparent survival rate' for three categories of females: nulliparous (p0), young parous (p1) and old parous flies (p2). The rate depends both on 'real survival rates' a0, a1 and a2, and a growth rate \( \beta_0 = \frac{a_0}{\lambda} \), \( \beta_1 = \frac{a_1}{\lambda} \), and \( \beta_2 = \frac{a_2}{\lambda} \). We used a matrix model, which can be parameterized if the pupal survival rate and the pupal period are known. Replacing \( a_0, a_1 \) and \( a_2 \) by \( \lambda \beta_0, \lambda \beta_1, \) and \( \lambda \beta_2 \) in the projection matrix, the problem amounts to calculating its dominant eigen-value \( \lambda \), and hence \( \beta_0, \beta_1 \) and \( \beta_2 \).

The application to a field population of Glossina palpalis palpalis Vanderplank in Burkina Faso showed there was a marked difference in survival rate according to age category. The average survival rate increased with age with decreasing variability. The results suggested that sampling (by trapping) may have had an effect on the dynamics of this tsetse population by age-regulating it artificially. This method may be a useful tool for monitoring tsetse control.

Introduction

Tsetse flies Glossina spp. (Diptera: Glossinidae), the vectors of sleeping sickness, are insects with the unusual characteristics of being viviparous, and having a low reproduction rate (about one larva every 10 days). The ovarian (or physiological) age of the female flies can be determined by examining the dissected ovaries under a microscope (Saunders, 1960). Several attempts have been made to estimate the survival rates of females from their ovarian age distribution (Saunders, 1962; Gouteux, 1982; Gouteux & Kiéou, 1982; Rogers & Randolph, 1984; Rogers et al., 1984; Challier & Turner, 1985).

However, as pointed out by Van Sickle (1988), these authors assume, more or less explicitly, that the population is stationary (asymptotic-growth rate \( h = 1 \), or intrinsic rate of increase \( r = 0 \)). In fact, without additional information adult survival (or mortality) cannot be dissociated from the growth rate. Hargrove (1993) consequently estimated, by a maximum likelihood method, a parameter depending on the mortality and the growth rate. To solve this problem, Van Sickle (1988), proposed an alternative method using the Euler-Lotka equation. It was necessary to assume only the population had a stable age distribution, and that an independent estimate of the survival rate could be obtained for one age class. Unfortunately, this author also showed that this method was very sensitive to sampling error and he recommended that the growth rate should be estimated independently from, for instance, data based on regular captures (Van Sickle & Phelps, 1988).

Here we propose a method similar to that of Van Sickle (1988), but derived using a matrix model adapted for studying Glossina populations (Jarry et al., 1996a). The model...
assumes that data are available on pupal survival rate, mean pupal period and ovarian age distribution.

Materials and methods

Life cycle of the female tsetse fly

The regular ovulation alternating between two ovaries, each of which contains two ovarioles, enables eight age-groups to be determined in tsetse flies. The first four age-groups can therefore be distinguished exactly. Subsequent cycles cannot be distinguished from one another and the four older age-groups therefore correspond only to age within a cycle (Challier, 1965; Jarry et al., 1996a) (Fig. 1). Each stage corresponding to the mean duration between two ovulations lasts for $h$ days (generally $h = 10$). Since the duration of the pupal stage varies between 20 and 50 days according to the temperature (cyclical seasonal variation, Jackson, 1949; Harby, 1968), it was subdivided into five hypothetical stages.
representation. The coefficient \( p_i \) represents the survival rate of the pupa in stage \( P_i \) over a period of \( h \) days and \( q_i \) the emergence rate of pupae in stage \( P_i \). The path from \( A_p \) to \( A_q \) represents the indeterminacy associated with the four older age-groups. The survival rate of a female in stage \( A_i \) over \( h \) days is noted by \( a_i \) and her fecundity by \( f_i \).

**Matrix modelling**

The matrix model is derived from the life cycle and involves only the female population.

The complete development of the estimation process is expressed in terms of \( N(t) \) for \( i = 0, \ldots, 7 \), which corresponds to a non-zero population size clearly in equations (2) can be estimated by maximum likelihood. For each sample of size \( n \), with \( n_p, n_1, \ldots, n_7 \) in each of the physiological age-groups \( A_p, A_1, \ldots, A_7 \), \( \beta \) may be estimated by solving numerically the equation:

\[
\frac{\partial \ln L(\beta)}{\partial \beta} = \frac{w_1}{\beta} - \frac{n}{1-\beta} + \frac{4w_2\beta^3}{1-\beta^4} = 0
\]

with \( w_1 = \sum_{i=1}^{7} n_i, \ w_2 = \sum_{i=1}^{7} n_i \) and \( \beta \neq 1 \) (see above).

Knowing the age structure of the adults is not in itself
Fig. 2. Variation in the estimated growth rate $\lambda$ of a population of *Glossina palpalis gambiensis* in the Burkina-Faso forest, assuming age-dependent survival rates of female. ■, acceptable fit to observed data ($\chi^2$ test, $\alpha = 0.05$); □, fit rejected; †, fit not tested, sample too small.

and may be obtained numerically. The coefficients $p_i$ and $e_i$ of the matrix $M$ being known, it is sufficient to replace $a_0$, $a_1$, and $a_2$ by $p_0 \lambda$, $p_1 \lambda$ and $p_2 \lambda$ to solve, as before, the equation:

$$\text{det}(M - \lambda I) = 0$$

Numerical solution of this equation gives $\lambda$, and hence $a_0$, $a_1$, and $a_2$.

Applications to *G. palpalis gambiensis* in the Burkina-Faso forest

The data used were obtained from a population of *Glossina palpalis gambiensis* Vanderplank (Diptera: Glossinidae) studied in the forest of Kou, Burkina-Faso, from 1964 to 1967 (Challier, 1973 and personal communication). The survival rates of the pupae (6) and the pupal period (3) were determined by monitoring the emergence of the adults from batches of young larvae distributed in small metal cages buried in the ground. When the normal emergence period was considered to have elapsed, the cages were fit of the model to the data, as tested by $\chi^2$, is acceptable only for 12 samples out of 29 (two samples were too small for this type of test). The growth rate $\lambda$ is obviously closely related to the survival of the adults. The growth rate fluctuated around 1 over the study period, varying between 0.84 and 1.1. An unfavourable period for population growth was observed every year between January and March (April in 1967), which corresponds to the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season, when the maximum temperature range is recorded. In the following period (the rainy season), the growth rate was less homogenous, with relatively strong fluctuations depending on the year. The growth rate increased at the end of the rainy season and at the beginning of the dry season, in particular in 1965 and 1966. Thus, although subject to seasonal fluctuations, the overall dynamics of the growth rate were considered to be stable (Jarry et al., 1996c).

The introduction of age-dependent survival rates modifies markedly the interpretation of these data (fig. 2). There is a clear improvement in the model fit ($\chi^2$ acceptable for 24 samples out of 29), but there are only four values of $\lambda$ over 1 and overall there is a decreasing trend in the growth rate. The trend in the different survival rates (fig. 3) shows marked differences according to the age of the flies. The average survival rate increases with age (0.456, 0.649 and 0.715 for nulliparous, young parous and old parous flies respectively), but the variability decreases (the variances are respectively 0.051, 0.040 and 0.016). In fact, for the old parous flies, the survival rate increased from around 0.60 at the beginning of the study to fluctuate around 0.70 at the
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Fig. 3. Variation in the survival rate for three categories of female Glossina palpalis gambiensis:

(i) nulliparous (a),
(ii) young parous (a1),
and (iii) old parous (a2).

Discussion

Several authors (e.g. Jordan & Curtis, 1972; Goutem & Kienou, 1982; Hargrove, 1990, 1991) consider that the assumption of constant mortality rates of adult flies is not valid. Both in the laboratory and in the field, the mortality graph was U-shaped. However, our results showed that the mortality decreases continuously with age. The high variability of the nulliparous females confirms that sampling this age-group is problematic, to the extent that several authors prefer to exclude these females when analysing data. The likelihood equation given by Hargrove (1993) is a good illustration of this. Survival rate of old parous is surprisingly high. We hypothesize that this is caused by a scale effect. Challier's cathg design covered a limited area.
(a few hundreds of square metres) and the local removal might be compensated by the displacement of parous females, especially the old ones, emigrating from surrounding areas. This addition of old parous flies was insufficient to keep the population at an equilibrium, but explains the ageing of the population. The application of our method to other data sets (in preparation) will enable this point to be examined in more detail.

Certain aspects related to the use of numerical methods for solving equations should be noted. The stability of numerical estimates of the apparent survival rates depends on the structure of the samples. In some cases, values of $\beta > 1$ were obtained, which is probably impossible in the context of the proposed matrix model. Indeed, graphs of the relationships between $\lambda$ and $a$ (Jarry et al., 1996b) suggest that the condition $\lambda > a$ is always fulfilled.

It should also be noted that although a poor model fit may indicate that the population is in a transitory stage, a good fit does not necessarily imply that the population is stationary. The relatively large fluctuations in the estimated growth rate between two successive months (e.g. April-May 1965 or July-August 1966), when the fit to the data was correct, pose a problem. In the future, a method of calculating the confidence intervals of the growth rate could be developed, but it seems quite clear, from a biological point of view, that these strong variations in growth rate are due to the migration of young parous flies. Thus, taking into account spatial aspects in this model of population dynamics would be an important subject for future research.

This contribution is an optimist’s reply to the pessimist conclusion of Jan Sickle (1988). This optimism is due to the good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good fit obtained with Challier’s data, allowing a very good

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