

PARASITIC FAUNA OF WILD AND FARMED CASCADURA (*Hoplosternum littorale*) OF TRINIDAD AND THEIR POTENTIAL ASSOCIATED PATHOLOGY

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The armoured catfish (*Hoplosternum littorale*) or cascadura, is a delicacy in Trinidad however, there is limited research on this species. This study aims to identify gastrointestinal and haematological parasites and their potential associated pathological effects in wild and farmed cascadura in Trinidad. Forty cascadura (20 wild; 20 farmed) were sampled. Blood smears and gastrointestinal tract sections were processed and stained with Haematoxylin and Eosin.

Morphometric measurements of whole fish and gastrointestinal tracts were recorded for further analysis.

Preliminary findings revealed organisms in the blood of 13 (32.5%) fish (five wild; eight farmed) including *Alternaria* spp. (17.5%), intra-erythrocytic inclusion bodies (7.5%) and an unidentified protozoan parasite (2.5%).

Gastrointestinal nematodes were found in four wild fish including one morphologically similar to *Anisakis* spp. The stomach and intestinal structures appeared histologically normal.

Further work is warranted to elucidate to possible harmful effects of these parasites to these fish and persons/animals consuming them.

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