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Leg 'cramp' and endoparasites

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The causes of leg 'cramp' in waders are not fully understood (*Wader Study Group Bull.* 24: 24; 27: 19–21; 28: 15–16). Stanyard (*Wader Study Group Bull.* 27: 19–21) reported that the three casualties out of 110 Curlews *Numenius arquata* caught were in a less advanced state of moult than the other birds and noted that 'this might indicate poorer condition'. However, Purchase and Minton (*Wader Study Group Bull.* 34: 24–26) found that female Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* with much subcutaneous fat (i.e. in 'good' condition) seemed more likely to suffer from 'cramp' than males or juveniles.

During the winter of 1980/81, a total of 256 Redshanks *Tringa totanus* were caught at night in mist nets in central Thailand. Of these, nine suffered from 'cramp', despite being placed in tall keeping boxes (*Wader Study Group Bull.* 20: 21–24) after capture, and were killed. A further four apparently healthy birds were also collected (two caught by the author and two from local bird nets. Of the latter, one was found freshly dead, and the other alive but with a dislocated leg). All specimens were prepared as museum skins. Brief examination of the carcasses revealed that five of the nine 'cramp' victims had some endoparasites (nematodes, cestodes, trematodes), and in several cases the burdens were heavy. None of the four healthy birds showed signs of endoparasite infections. (All parasites are awaiting identification). It is therefore possible that waders with endoparasite burdens and so possibly in poor condition, may be more liable to 'cramp' than waders in better condition. To further examine the possibility of a link between endoparasite burden and leg 'cramp', it would be useful if those people with access to 'cramp' victims examine them for endoparasites as well as determining general body condition.

Valium against leg cramp in waders

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On five different occasions Knots *Calidris canutus* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* suffering from leg cramp were successfully treated with valium (diazepam). They recovered, in several cases after a period of deep sleep. Although valium was applied on only two wader species, we suspect that it may generally be applicable. We suggest that valium-tablets (of e.g. 1 mg) are henceforth at hand during catching operations to try to treat any victims of leg cramp.