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► **To cite this version:**

Eva J.P. Lievens, Nicolas O. Rode, Julie Landes, Adeline Segard, Roula Jabbour-Zahab, et al.. Long-term prevalence data reveals spillover dynamics in a multi-host (*Artemia*), multi-parasite (*Microsporidia*) community. *International Journal for Parasitology*, 2019, 49 (6), pp.471-480. <10.1016/j.ijpara.2019.01.002>. <hal-02361478>

HAL Id: hal-02361478

<https://hal.science/hal-02361478v1>

Submitted on 19 Nov 2020

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1 **LONG-TERM PREVALENCE DATA REVEALS SPILLOVER DYNAMICS IN A MULTI-**
2 **HOST (*ARTEMIA*), MULTI-PARASITE (*MICROSPORIDIA*) COMMUNITY**

3 Eva J.P. Lievens*^{1,2}, Nicolas O. Rode¹, Julie Landes¹, Adeline Segard¹, Roula Jabbour-Zahab¹,

4 Yannis Michalakis², Thomas Lenormand¹

5 ¹UMR 5175 CEFE, CNRS–Université de Montpellier–Université P. Valéry–EPHE, 1919 Route
6 de Mende, 34293 Montpellier Cedex 5, France

7 ²UMR 5290 MIVEGEC, CNRS–IRD–Université de Montpellier, 911 Avenue Agropolis BP
8 64501, 34394 Montpellier Cedex 5, France

9 *Corresponding author: Eva J.P. Lievens (eva.j.lievens@gmail.com)

10 **ABSTRACT**

11 In the study of multi-host parasites, it is often found that host species contribute asymmetrically
12 to parasite transmission, with cascading effects on parasite dynamics and overall community
13 structure. Yet, identifying which of the host species contribute to parasite transmission and
14 maintenance is a recurring challenge. Here, we approach this issue by taking advantage of
15 natural variation in the community composition of host species. We studied the horizontally
16 transmitted microsporidians *Anostracospora rigaudi* and *Enterocytozpora artemiae* in a
17 Southern French metacommunity of their brine shrimp hosts, *Artemia franciscana* and *Artemia*
18 *parthenogenetica*. Within the metacommunity, patches can contain either or both of the *Artemia*
19 host species, so that long-term prevalence data can provide a direct link between the presence of
20 the two host species and the persistence of the two parasites. First, we show that the
21 microsporidian *A. rigaudi* is a spillover parasite: it was unable to persist in the absence of its
22 maintenance host *A. parthenogenetica*. This result was particularly striking in light of *A.*
23 *rigaudi*'s high prevalence (in the field) and high infectivity (when tested in the lab) in both hosts.
24 Moreover, *A. parthenogenetica*'s seasonal presence imposed seasonality on the rate of spillover,
25 causing cyclical pseudo-endemics in the spillover host *A. franciscana*. Second, while our
26 prevalence data was sufficient to identify *E. artemiae* as either a spillover or a facultative multi-
27 host parasite, we could not distinguish between the two possibilities. This study supports the
28 importance of studying the community context of multi-host parasites, and demonstrates that in
29 appropriate multi-host systems, sampling across a range of conditions and host communities can
30 lead to clear conclusions about the drivers of parasite persistence.

31 **Keywords:** *Artemia*, host specificity, microsporidians, multi-host, reservoir host, seasonality,
32 spillovers

33 INTRODUCTION

34 Although many parasites infect multiple host species within their community (Cleaveland et al.
35 2001, Taylor et al. 2001), not all hosts are created equal. Host species vary widely in their degree
36 of exposure to the parasite (e.g. Kilpatrick et al. 2006), competence (e.g. LoGiudice et al. 2003,
37 Auld et al. 2017), and population density (e.g. Dobson 1995, Rhodes et al. 1998, Searle et al.
38 2016). These factors affect their contribution to the parasite's overall transmission, and thus to
39 the maintenance of a persistent parasite population (Dobson 2004, Streicker et al. 2013).

40 Quantifying the relative contribution of each host species to the persistence of a multi-host
41 parasite is important for several reasons. Host species that contribute substantially to the
42 parasite's maintenance have a strong influence on its epidemiology (Viana et al. 2014) and
43 evolutionary trajectory (Holt and Hochberg 2002, Benmayor et al. 2009, Ching et al. 2013), and
44 can be pinpointed in the development of disease control strategies (Fenton and Pedersen 2005,
45 Streicker et al. 2013). Furthermore, asymmetrical transmission of parasites between host species
46 can feed back into community structure (Hatcher et al. 2006).

47 Unfortunately, identifying which host species contribute to the persistence of a parasite
48 population is notoriously difficult (Viana et al. 2014). Pathogens can persist in a host population
49 if their basic reproduction number R_0 , which represents the number of secondary cases caused by
50 a single infected host, is greater than one (Dobson 2004, Streicker et al. 2013). The host is then
51 said to maintain the parasite population. In multi-host communities, each host species contributes
52 to the parasite's overall R_0 , and an R_0 greater than one can mask a lot of variation in those
53 contributions. For example, Fenton et al. (2015) considered a parasite infecting a simple two-host
54 community, finding that it may fall into three underlying categories: *i*) a facultative multi-host
55 parasite, which can be maintained by either host in the absence of the other (R_0 would still be

56 greater than one if either host was removed from the community); *ii*) an obligate multi-host
57 parasite, which can only persist when both hosts are present (R_0 would be lower than one if
58 either host was removed); *iii*) a spillover parasite, which can be maintained indefinitely by one of
59 the host species, but not by the other (R_0 in isolation would be respectively greater and lower
60 than one). In the final case, the parasite's presence in the second, 'spillover' host is dependent on
61 regular reintroductions from the 'reservoir' or 'maintenance' host (Ashford 1997, Haydon et al.
62 2002). Distinguishing between these fundamentally distinct, but superficially similar categories
63 is challenging. Lab-based tests of host competence are insufficient, as the epidemiology of the
64 system is key (Searle et al. 2016); solutions therefore include the establishment of
65 epidemiological, statistical, or genetic models, which may be labor-intensive and sensitive to
66 assumptions (Viana et al. 2014).

67 Another way to identify into which category a multi-host parasite falls is to exploit variation in
68 the composition of natural host communities (Fig. 1). For example, a parasite which can be
69 found in communities containing both hosts *A* and *B*, but also in isolated populations of host *A* or
70 host *B*, is clearly a facultative multi-host parasite. In contrast, a parasite that spills over from host
71 *A* to host *B* can be identified by its presence in communities containing host *A* or hosts *A* and *B*,
72 but repeated absence in communities containing only host *B*. This type of observation explicitly
73 links the presence or absence of hosts to the presence or absence of disease, and can therefore
74 lead to direct conclusions. Previously, such conclusions have mostly been drawn from human
75 interventions, such as the vaccination or cull of a suspected reservoir (e.g. Dobson 1995, Caley et
76 al. 1999, MacInnes et al. 2001, Nugent 2005, Serrano et al. 2011), or through the experimental
77 construction of host communities (e.g. Power and Mitchell 2004, Searle et al. 2016). However,
78 the approach need not be limited to created variation: we can also look for 'natural experiments',

79 host communities whose composition varies in the field. Of course, as natural experiments are
80 not planned, due caution must be taken with regards to potential confounding factors. For
81 instance, the epidemiology of a focal parasite may be shaped by an environmental variable (e.g.
82 temperature, Altizer et al. 2006, Dunn et al. 2006), which happens to covary with the presence of
83 a certain host. To ensure that the conclusions are robust to any such effects, the observations
84 must be repeated across a range of relevant field conditions (e.g. different temperatures).

85 We illustrate the natural experiment approach using a two-host, two-parasite system: the brine
86 shrimp *Artemia franciscana* and *Artemia parthenogenetica*, and their microsporidian parasites
87 *Anostracospora rigaudi* and *Enterocytophora artemiae*. These species occur in sympatry in the
88 French saltern of Aigues-Mortes (Rode et al. 2013a), whose interconnected basins form a
89 metacommunity with patchy species composition. Taking advantage of this variation, we use
90 long-term prevalence data to place the two parasites into the epidemiological categories
91 described above (spillover, facultative multi-host, or obligate multi-host parasites), adding
92 experimental tests of infectivity to investigate some of our conclusions in more depth. We find
93 that the first microsporidian is a spillover parasite, whose spillover dynamics shape its seasonal
94 prevalence. In contrast, we are unable to identify conclusively whether the second
95 microsporidian is a spillover or a facultative multi-host parasite, and we discuss the relative
96 merits of our approach compared to projections based on epidemiological models.

97 **METHODS**

98 **Host-parasite system**

99 *Artemia* (Branchiopoda: Anostraca), also called brine shrimp, is a genus of small crustaceans
100 whose members populate salt lakes and salterns around the world. In Southern France, two

101 *Artemia* species coexist: *A. parthenogenetica* and *A. franciscana*. *A. parthenogenetica* is a
102 parthenogenetic clade native to the area, while *A. franciscana* is a bisexual species native to the
103 New World (Thiéry and Robert 1992, Amat et al. 2005). *A. franciscana* was first introduced to
104 this region in the 1970's (Rode et al. 2013c).

105 *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* are microsporidian parasites of *Artemia* (Rode et al. 2013a). Although
106 highly prevalent in Southern France (Rode et al. 2013c), they have only recently been described
107 and little is known about their ecology. Both species parasitize the gut epithelium and are
108 continuously transmitted to new hosts via free-living spores (Rode et al. 2013b, 2013a).

109 Previously, in a ‘snapshot’ sampling effort of the Mediterranean coast, *A. rigaudi* was found to
110 be more prevalent in *A. parthenogenetica*, while *E. artemiae* was more prevalent in *A.*
111 *franciscana* (Rode et al. 2013c).

112 We studied *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* infecting *A. franciscana* and *A. parthenogenetica* in the
113 saltern of Aigues-Mortes, in Southern France. This is a seasonal system, where both temperature
114 (Fig. 2A) and salinity (Fig. 2B) vary throughout the year. *Artemia* hosts are present year-round in
115 large quantities, but their average density varies by more than an order of magnitude between
116 late winter and early summer (estimated at respectively ≤ 1 and 10-15 individuals/L; J. P.
117 Rullmann & P. Grillas, personal communication). The species composition of the *Artemia*
118 community also varies seasonally: *A. parthenogenetica* are entirely absent in winter, but form the
119 majority of the population in summer (Fig. 2C).

120 The Aigues-Mortes saltern forms a metacommunity of *Artemia* hosts with patchy species
121 composition. The saltern is made up of a network of large interconnected basins, between which
122 water is allowed to flow or not as a function of the salt production process. This causes
123 environmental factors such as salinity and food quality to vary, leading to variation in the

124 outcomes of inter-host competition: *A. franciscana* or *A. parthenogenetica* can outcompete one
125 another or coexist (Browne 1980, Browne and Halanych 1989, Barata et al. 1996b). At any given
126 time, therefore, adjoining basins can contain different host communities, though gene flow
127 between the basins is regular enough that there is no genetic spatial structure in the *Artemia*
128 populations (Nougué et al. 2015). Within basins, *Artemia* populations are well-mixed (Lenz and
129 Browne 1991), so that we can assume that the microsporidians' spore pools are shared among the
130 host species (cf. Fels 2006).

131 **Long-term field data**

132 *Data collection*

133 We obtained prevalence data for *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* from 94 samples of *Artemia* spp.,
134 collected at 14 different sites in the Aigues-Mortes saltern between 2008 and 2015 (Table 1).
135 There was no visible swarming behavior at any of the sampled locations at the time of collection
136 (swarming skews microsporidian prevalence, Rode et al. 2013b). Samples were either processed
137 immediately after collection, or stored in 96% ethanol and processed later; this prevented any
138 infection-specific mortality from skewing the results. We tested a random subset of adult *A.*
139 *parthenogenetica* and/or *A. franciscana* from each sample for the presence of *A. rigaudi* and *E.*
140 *artemiae* (mean = 26.8 *Artemia* individuals/sample, *sd* = 24.3). In samples which contained both
141 *A. parthenogenetica* and *A. franciscana*, we usually tested for infection in both host species.
142 Testing was done by PCR using species-specific microsporidian primers, following Rode et al.
143 (2013a).

144 In addition to prevalence data, we had environmental and demographic data for most of the
145 samples; we call these variables "sample-specific variables". First, we knew whether each

146 sample came from a low-, middle- or high-salinity site. The absolute salinity at any given site
147 can change dramatically from one day to the next if the water flow in the saltern is redirected.
148 However, the structure of the saltern means that the salinity at some sites is always lower, higher,
149 or roughly equal to the average salinity of the saltern at that time. We classified these as low-,
150 high-, and middle-salinity sites, respectively ($n = 7, 3,$ and 3 sites; Table 1). This relative
151 classification acts as a residual of salinity after seasonal effects are taken into account, and is not
152 sensitive to the large variability of the absolute salinity measures. We were unable to assign a
153 classification to Site 5, for which we lacked salinity information, or to the 8 samples with an
154 unknown sampling site. Second, we had information on the species composition of each sample:
155 whether it contained both *A. franciscana* and *A. parthenogenetica* ($n = 65$ samples), only *A.*
156 *franciscana* ($n = 25$ samples), or only *A. parthenogenetica* ($n = 3$ samples). One sample had an
157 unknown species composition.

158 *Statistical analyses*

159 The goal of our statistical analyses was to identify whether host community composition affected
160 the prevalence of *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae*, while controlling for the two major environmental
161 factors in the saltern (temperature and salinity). To do this, we analyzed the prevalence data of
162 each microsporidian species in two steps: first, a general model of the prevalence over time;
163 second, a more complex model that included sample-specific variables. All analyses were
164 performed using generalized additive mixed models (in R version 3.1.3, R Core Team 2015,
165 package “*gam4*” Wood and Scheipl 2017), with the number of infected vs. non-infected hosts
166 as the response variable (binomial response with logit link). Model comparison was done using
167 the corrected AIC (Hurvich and Tsai 1989).

168 First, we constructed models to describe each microsporidian's yearly prevalence curve, using all
169 of the collected data ($n = 138$ observations, of which 72 in *A. franciscana* and 66 in *A.*
170 *parthenogenetica*). These models simply describe the seasonal dynamics of each parasite, i.e.
171 they control for seasonal variation in temperature. We modelled $Prevalence_{ij} = Host\ species_i \times$
172 $s(Month_j) + Sample_j$, where $Prevalence_{ij}$ represents the proportion of infected host species i in
173 sample j , $s(Month_j)$ represents a smoothing function of the continuous *Month* variable (the
174 degree of smoothness is adjusted automatically, Wood and Scheipl 2017), and $Sample_j$ is a
175 random effect controlling for the non-independence of prevalences in *A. franciscana* and *A.*
176 *parthenogenetica* from the same sample. (We did not include the sampling site in our analyses
177 because working salterns regularly re-distribute the water between basins, so *Artemia* sampled
178 from the same site may or may not have the same genetic background.) The random effect
179 $Sample_j$ was retained in all of the compared models. The resulting optimal models are hereafter
180 referred to as the 'general models'.

181 Second, we investigated whether prevalence was affected by host species composition (our
182 variable of interest) and the sample-specific salinity (which we wish to control for),
183 independently of the variation already explained by our general models. We restricted our dataset
184 to observations of *A. franciscana*, because we had no power to test the effect of species
185 composition on prevalence in *A. parthenogenetica* (the latter was only present by itself in three
186 samples). We further restricted our dataset to sites where the salinity classification and the
187 species composition were known ($n = 62$ observations in total). For each microsporidian species,
188 we used the general model from the previous section as a null model, and compared it to
189 alternative models with added sample-specific terms. We modelled $Prevalence_{ij} = (\text{fixed terms}$
190 $\text{of the general model}) \times (Presence\ of\ A.\ parthenogenetica_j + Relative\ salinity_j) + Sample_j$, where

191 *Presence of A. parthenogenetica*_j and *Relative salinity*_j are the sample-specific variables of
192 sample *j*, and *Sample*_j is an observation-level random effect accounting for heterogeneity across
193 samples (overdispersion, Harrison 2015). Because *Host species*_i was always *A. franciscana*, it
194 was no longer necessary to include this fixed effect, as we did in the general models. The other
195 fixed terms of the general model and the random effect *Sample*_j were retained in all of the
196 compared models.

197 In addition, we tested whether coinfection rates (with both *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae*) were
198 significantly higher or lower than expected, as may be the case when parasites inhibit or facilitate
199 each other, or when certain classes of hosts are more or less vulnerable. We used Cochran-
200 Mantel-Haenszel tests (package “stats” in R version 3.1.3, R Core Team 2015) to test the
201 independence of *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* prevalence across samples; these tests were executed
202 separately for *A. franciscana* and *A. parthenogenetica*.

203 **Experimental tests of microsporidian infectivity**

204 The results of our long-term field data revealed variation in prevalence among host species and
205 on a seasonal basis (see Results). Since field patterns may not reflect functional relationships, we
206 performed two experiments testing the infectivity of *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* in each host and
207 at two temperatures. In both cases, we detected infection using the PCR protocol described by
208 Rode et al. (2013a), and we relied on their finding that an infection is detectable 5-6 days after
209 the host has been exposed to parasite spores.

210 *Experiment 1: Effect of temperature and host species/genotype on transmission*

211 We tested the effects of temperature and recipient host species on parasite transmission by
212 exposing non-infected *A. franciscana* or *A. parthenogenetica* to *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* at 15

213 or 25°C. The purpose of this experiment was firstly to examine the effects of temperature on
214 transmission, and secondarily to provide a rough idea of variation in susceptibility across host
215 species. We did not aim to investigate asymmetric transmission (so we did not add a crossed
216 ‘donor host’ factor), nor to thoroughly document variation in susceptibility across host genotypes
217 (so we used a logistically feasible subset).

218 The non-infected, ‘recipient’ hosts were adult *Artemia* spp. pulled from laboratory stock
219 collections of Aigues-Mortes lineages. For *A. parthenogenetica*, prior evidence suggests that
220 microsporidian infectivity depends on host genotype (Rode et al. 2013b), so the recipient hosts
221 were collected from four clones, P6 to P9 (P6 and P7 correspond to PAM6 and PAM7 in Nougé
222 et al. 2015). For each clone, we used females from two lines, which had been maintained
223 separately for several generations to standardize maternal effects. We named these recipient
224 groups P6.1, P6.2, P7.1, P7.2, P8.1, P8.2, P9.1, and P9.2. For *A. franciscana*, we formed four
225 replicate recipient groups, F1 to F4.

226 From each recipient group, 10 individuals were exposed to infection at 15°C, 10 individuals
227 were exposed to infection at 25°C, 5 individuals served as negative controls at 15°C, and 5
228 individuals served as negative controls at 25°C. The recipient individuals were infected via
229 exposure to infected ‘donor’ hosts. Donor hosts were a mixed group of *A. parthenogenetica* and
230 *A. franciscana*, collected from sites in the Aigues-Mortes saltern with high prevalences of *A.*
231 *rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* (as ascertained by preliminary PCRs). Using a field-sampled group of
232 mixed donors mimicked natural transmission conditions. Groups of 15 donors were placed in
233 strainers above the jars of 10 recipient hosts. This allowed spores to pass through, but kept
234 donors and recipients from mixing (Rode et al. 2013b). The strainers were rotated every 45
235 minutes to ensure randomized exposure. Exposure lasted for 9 hours, followed by a 6-day

236 incubation period. On day 6 of the incubation period, the surviving individuals were sacrificed
237 and tested for the presence of *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* as described previously.

238 *Experiment 2: Effect of temperature and incubation time on A. rigaudi detection*

239 In experiment 1, both microsporidians had low transmission success at 15°C (see Results).

240 However, the factors underlying this temperature effect were unclear: the reduced transmission
241 could have been caused by a direct effect of temperature on the microsporidians (e.g. on spore
242 germination, Undeen et al. 1993), or by indirect effects of temperature on the ectothermic hosts.

243 Cool temperatures lower the metabolic rate of *Artemia* (Engel and Angelovic 1968), thereby also
244 lowering their defecation and ingestion rates (which would have reduced the effective inoculum
245 size, Burns 1969, Larsen et al. 2008) and dampening their cellular metabolism (which could have
246 slowed the accumulation of microsporidian DNA in the host, Dunn et al. 2006). Since *E.*

247 *artemiae* was present in the field in winter (see Results), we could infer that its low transmission
248 success at 15°C must be due, at least in part, to indirect effects on the hosts. However, for *A.*

249 *rigaudi*, which was not found in the field in winter (see Results), it was important to disentangle
250 these confounding effects. To do this, we designed an experiment to compare the effects of

251 temperature and incubation time on (detected) infectivity, while maintaining a standardized spore
252 dose. We limited this experiment to testing *A. rigaudi* infecting *A. franciscana*.

253 In this experiment, we allowed *A. rigaudi* infections to incubate at 15°C or 25°C for different

254 lengths of time (6 days vs. 12 days). We exposed adult *A. franciscana* from an uninfected

255 laboratory stock population to feces containing *A. rigaudi* spores. The feces were collected from
256 a laboratory stock of *Artemia* spp. infected with *A. rigaudi*; the spore concentration was

257 unknown. Exposure occurred in groups: six groups of 20 hosts were placed in 50 mL autoclaved

258 brine and 2.8 mL fecal solution was added. Four groups were exposed at 15°C, while two groups

259 were exposed at 25°C. Exposure lasted two days, during which time all spores could be ingested
260 (Reeve 1963). After two days, hosts were separated and each individual was placed in a
261 hemolymph tube containing 2.5 mL brine; this prevented between-recipient infections later in the
262 experiment. The infection was allowed to incubate at the exposure temperature for four days,
263 after which half of the surviving hosts from each group were sacrificed, and two of the groups
264 exposed at 15°C were moved to 25°C. After a further six days of incubation, all remaining hosts
265 were sacrificed and tested for the presence of *A. rigaudi*.

266 *Statistical analyses*

267 Statistical analyses of the experiments were performed using generalized linear mixed models
268 (package “lme4”, Bates et al. 2015, in R version 3.1.3, R Core Team 2015), with the number of
269 infected vs. non-infected hosts as the response variable (binomial response with logit link). The
270 significance of the predictors was tested using likelihood ratio tests.

271 For Experiment 1, we analyzed the probability of detecting an infection separately for *A. rigaudi*
272 and *E. artemiae*. Fixed effects included *Temperature*, a *Species/Genotype* factor, and their
273 interaction. As we expected to find differences among the *A. parthenogenetica* clones (Rode et
274 al. 2013b), but could not distinguish between the mixed-together *A. franciscana* families, the
275 *Species/Genotype* factor comprised 5 levels: *A. franciscana*, *A. parthenogenetica* P6, *A.*
276 *parthenogenetica* P7, *A. parthenogenetica* P8, and *A. parthenogenetica* P9. We included
277 *Recipient group* as a random effect to control for shared genetic and environmental effects.

278 For experiment 2, our statistical analyses used *Exposure temperature*, *Periods incubating at*
279 *15°C*, and *Periods incubating at 25°C* as fixed effects (with one period equal to six days), with
280 *Host group* as a random variable controlling for pseudo-replication. Since the sensitivity of our

281 PCR was fixed, an increase in detectability over time reflects an increase in the quantity of
282 parasite DNA present in the host (i.e. intra-host parasite reproduction).

283 **RESULTS**

284 **Long-term field data**

285 First, we described the prevalence dynamics for *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* throughout the year
286 (Fig. 3, Supp. Table 1). *Anostracospora rigaudi* was strongly seasonal: it was highly prevalent
287 from August to October, but absent in winter (*Month* effect, $\Delta\text{AICc} \geq 52.7$; Fig. 3A & B). These
288 seasonal dynamics were not different in the two hosts, but its prevalence was higher in *A.*
289 *parthenogenetica* (effect of *Host species*, $\Delta\text{AICc} \geq 156.2$; Fig. 3A vs. B). The prevalence of *E.*
290 *artemiae* was highly variable and this microsporidian was not strongly seasonal; nevertheless
291 there was statistical support for temporal effects. The precise dynamics depended on the host
292 species: *E. artemiae*'s prevalence increased more steeply towards the end of the year in *A.*
293 *parthenogenetica* than in *A. franciscana* (interaction between *Host species* and *Month* effect,
294 $\Delta\text{AICc} \geq 4.8$; Fig. 3C & D). Overall, *E. artemiae* was more prevalent in *A. franciscana* (Fig. 3D
295 vs. C).

296 Next, we introduced sample-specific effects to the general models, investigating the effects of
297 salinity and the presence of *A. parthenogenetica* on the prevalence of the microsporidians in *A.*
298 *franciscana* (Fig. 4, Supp. Table 2). For *A. rigaudi*, the species composition had a strong effect
299 ($\Delta\text{AICc} \geq 5.0$): in the absence of *A. parthenogenetica*, the prevalence of *A. rigaudi* was almost
300 always 0%, and never higher than 10% (Fig. 4B). In contrast, in the presence of *A.*
301 *parthenogenetica* the prevalence could be very high, and the seasonal dynamics found in the
302 general model reappeared (Fig. 4A). There was good support for an additional effect of salinity

303 classification ($\Delta\text{AICc} = 2.1$), with the high-salinity sites typically having lower prevalences. For
304 *E. artemiae*, the salinity classification had no effect, and there was little support for an effect of
305 species composition ($\Delta\text{AICc} \leq -2.1$).

306 Finally, coinfection rates varied from 0% to 83% in our samples. Infection with *A. rigaudi* and *E.*
307 *artemiae* was independent for *A. parthenogenetica* (Mantel-Haenszel $\chi^2(1) < 0.1$, $p = 0.83$,
308 common odds ratio = 0.8), but was positively associated for *A. franciscana* (slightly more
309 coinfection observed than expected; Mantel-Haenszel $\chi^2(1) = 5.1$, $p = 0.02$, common odds ratio =
310 1.9).

311 **Experimental tests of microsporidian infectivity**

312 *Experiment 1: Effect of temperature and host/genotype on transmission*

313 The P8 genotype of *A. parthenogenetica* and the F4 replicate of *A. franciscana* were previously
314 infected (all controls tested positive for *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae*, respectively), so these
315 recipient groups were removed from the analysis. Surprisingly, the previous infections appeared
316 to have an inhibitory effect: none of the exposed P8s were infected with *E. artemiae* at the end of
317 the experiment ($n = 38$), and none of the exposed F4s were infected with *A. rigaudi* ($n = 21$).

318 Temperature had a clear effect on the probability of infection of both *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae*;
319 neither infected well at low temperatures ($\chi^2(1) = 136.3$ and 46.5 , $p < 0.001$ in both cases; Fig.
320 5). *Anostracospira rigaudi* infected all three genotypes of *A. parthenogenetica* and *A.*
321 *franciscana* equally well ($\chi^2(3) = 0.8$, $p = 0.85$), but infectivity was dependent on
322 *Species/Genotype* in *E. artemiae* ($\chi^2(3) = 18.1$, $p < 0.001$; Fig. 5B). Post-hoc Tukey tests
323 indicated that *A. franciscana* and P9 were equally susceptible to *E. artemiae*, while P6 and P7

324 were much less susceptible ($z \leq -2.9$, $p < 0.01$). There were no significant interaction effects
325 between temperature and *Species/Genotype*.

326 *Experiment 2: Effect of temperature and incubation time on A. rigaudi detection*

327 The probability of detecting *A. rigaudi* in *A. franciscana* – i.e. the within-host accumulation of
328 parasite DNA – increased significantly with incubation at 25°C, but not at 15°C ($\chi^2(1) = 31.9$ and
329 1.9, $p < 0.001$ and $p = 0.18$, respectively; Fig. 6). There was no significant effect of the exposure
330 temperature on infectivity ($\chi^2(1) = 0.0$, $p = 0.91$). Therefore, the apparent reduction in infectivity
331 of *A. rigaudi* at 15°C during experiment 1 was at least partly caused by slower parasite
332 reproduction inside the hosts, delaying its detectability. The lower rates of detection after 6 days
333 of incubation at 25°C in this experiment compared to experiment 1 could be explained by a
334 lower initial spore dose.

335 **DISCUSSION**

336 When a parasite infects multiple host species, we cannot gain an adequate understanding of its
337 epidemiology and evolution without knowing which of the host species actually contributes to its
338 transmission and maintenance. In this study, we exploit natural variation in the composition of
339 *Artemia* host communities to identify their microsporidian parasites as either spillover,
340 facultative multi-host, or obligate multi-host parasites (Fenton et al. 2015). Our primary result is
341 that *A. rigaudi* is a spillover parasite, whose high infectivity in both hosts causes pseudo-endemic
342 dynamics. Secondarily, we show that *E. artemiae* may be a spillover or a facultative multi-host
343 parasite, and speculate that it is the first. Finally, we reflect on the link between the
344 microsporidians' host specificity and seasonal dynamics, and discuss the merits of our method.

345 *A. rigaudi* is (secretly) a spillover parasite

346 Our long-term prevalence data revealed that *A. rigaudi* is a spillover parasite: it cannot persist on
347 *A. franciscana* in the absence of *A. parthenogenetica* (Fig. 4). The presence of the parasite in *A.*
348 *franciscana* must therefore be dependent on regular re-introductions from *A. parthenogenetica*,
349 its maintenance host. This result is robust to variation in temperature (the effect can be found in
350 every season, Fig. 3) and salinity (the effect is found across all salinity categories, results not
351 shown), which are the main environmental factors that affect this system. Under the relevant
352 natural conditions, populations of *A. franciscana* are unable to maintain *A. rigaudi*.

353 Parasites are unable to persist in a host species if that host provides little or no transmission,
354 which may occur if its susceptibility, abundance, and/or lifetime spore production are low
355 (Dobson 2004, Streicker et al. 2013). Our experiments ruled out the first possibility for *A.*
356 *franciscana* and *A. rigaudi*, as both hosts were equally susceptible to the microsporidian (Fig.
357 5A). The second possibility, that sites containing only *A. franciscana* have consistently lower
358 host densities, we also consider to be unlikely. Although the dataset used here does not contain
359 demographic information, both observation and available evidence show that *A. franciscana*-
360 only sites can reach similar densities as sites containing both hosts (J. P. Rullmann & P. Grillas,
361 unpublished data). Instead, *Artemia* biomass is mainly constrained by food availability (Browne
362 1980), temperature (Barata et al. 1996a), and salinity (Wear and Haslett 1986), which are
363 seasonal environmental factors (see Fig. 1). We therefore predict that the third possibility is most
364 probable, namely that *A. franciscana* is a poor host for *A. rigaudi* because infected hosts produce
365 few spores. Further experimental studies will be needed to confirm this hypothesis.

366 The contrast between *A. rigaudi*'s generalist infectivity and status as a spillover parasite is
367 particularly interesting. At first glance, its high infectivity in the two hosts, as tested in the lab

368 and reflected in the field prevalences (Figs. 4A, 2A & B), may tempt us to conclude that *A.*
369 *rigaudi* is a generalist parasite. Only a more detailed analysis of the field data belies this
370 generalist infectivity, and reveals *A. rigaudi*'s 'secret' host specificity. This result is a good
371 demonstration of the dangers of using only infectivity as an indicator of parasite specialization
372 and long-term success (Agosta et al. 2010, Lange et al. 2015). In addition, the high infectivity of
373 *A. rigaudi* in *A. franciscana* means that spillovers from *A. parthenogenetica* to *A. franciscana*
374 occur frequently enough that the parasite appears to be independently present in both hosts (Fig.
375 2A & B). Some authors have termed such frequent spillovers 'apparent multi-host' or 'pseudo-
376 endemic' dynamics (Fenton and Pedersen 2005, Viana et al. 2014)(cf. Dobson 1995, Rhodes et
377 al. 1998), terms which explicitly indicate the difficulty of distinguishing such dynamics from
378 true endemism. This makes the danger of misinterpreting the epidemiology and evolution of
379 pseudo-endemic parasites very high, if their community context is not investigated.
380 *Anostracospora rigaudi* itself is a good example of this problem. Based on previously available
381 information, an earlier paper proposed that *A. rigaudi* could overwinter by infecting the invasive
382 *A. franciscana*, thereby increasing its negative impact on the population of native *A.*
383 *parthenogenetica* (a process known as "spillback", Rode et al. 2013c). In contrast, our current
384 conclusion suggests that *A. franciscana* individuals act as inhibitory hosts, absorbing more *A.*
385 *rigaudi* spores than they produce (Holt et al. 2003), and thereby diluting the effect of *A. rigaudi*
386 on *A. parthenogenetica* (Ostfeld and Keesing 2000, Hall et al. 2009).

387 *E. artemiae* may be a spillover or a facultative multi-host parasite

388 Our prevalence data identified *E. artemiae* as either a spillover or a facultative multi-host
389 parasite, but was insufficiently powerful to distinguish between the two possibilities. We were
390 unable to analyze the ability of *E. artemiae* to persist on *A. parthenogenetica* because only three

391 of our samples did not contain *A. franciscana*. Although these three samples were *E. artemiae*-
392 free, this may have been due to chance. Based on our experimental test of infectivity, however,
393 we suspect that *E. artemiae* is also a spillover parasite, in this case from *A. franciscana* to *A.*
394 *parthenogenetica*. At high temperatures, *E. artemiae* is very infective in *A. franciscana* and the
395 *A. parthenogenetica* genotype P9, but not at all in the genotypes P6 and P7 (Fig. 5B). These
396 findings are consistent with the genotype-dependent prevalence data collected earlier by Rode et
397 al. (2013b) in natural populations. Since *A. parthenogenetica* populations are a mix of different
398 genotypes (Nougué et al. 2015), we can expect *E. artemiae* to infect *A. parthenogenetica* less
399 well on average. (This interpretation is consistent with our field observations, but some caution is
400 still merited. Since we only tested a small number of genotypes, it is possible that our results
401 would change given a more thorough evaluation of the within-host genetic variation for
402 resistance (cf. Luijckx et al. 2014).) The spillover effect of *E. artemiae* might therefore be even
403 stronger than that of *A. rigaudi*, as the former appears to be more specifically infective than the
404 latter. In the absence of conclusive evidence, however, this microsporidian serves as an excellent
405 example of the difficulty of using observational data to identifying host contributions to parasite
406 success (see discussion below).

407 *Presence of maintenance hosts shapes parasite seasonality*

408 When comparing the seasonal prevalence patterns of *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* (Fig. 2) with the
409 seasonal changes in host community composition (Fig. 1C), it quickly becomes clear that the two
410 are linked. *Anostracospora rigaudi*'s maintenance host, *A. parthenogenetica*, is entirely seasonal,
411 being completely absent in winter and highly prevalent in late summer and autumn; logically,
412 therefore, *A. rigaudi* is also strongly seasonal. In contrast, *E. artemiae* is able to persist
413 throughout the year, with no overarching seasonal prevalence pattern. By testing infectivity at

414 warm and cool temperature, and comparing the two parasites, we can gain further insight into *A.*
415 *rigaudi*'s absence in winter. Although low temperatures did slow parasite reproduction within
416 the host when tested in *A. rigaudi* (Fig. 5), they did not make infection impossible for either
417 parasite (*A. rigaudi*: filled triangle in Fig. 5; *E. artemiae*: open circles in Fig. 4B), and clearly do
418 not preclude persistence of *E. artemiae* (Fig. 2D). Therefore, it is possible that *A. rigaudi* could
419 persist in winter, if given the opportunity to do so by the presence of *A. parthenogenetica*. We
420 therefore conclude that the general prevalence patterns of *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* are
421 predominantly shaped by host specialization, and not by environmental factors.

422 The seasonal cycles of *A. rigaudi* in its spillover host *A. franciscana* are of particular interest
423 (Fig. 2B). These are clearly caused by the seasonal presence of the maintenance host *A.*
424 *parthenogenetica*, which enforces seasonality on *A. rigaudi* and therefore on the frequency of
425 spillovers. Seasonal cycles in prevalence occur in many host-parasite systems, and are often
426 explained by factors such as climate, host behavior, and host immunity (Hosseini et al. 2004,
427 Duffy et al. 2005, 2009, Grassly et al. 2005, Altizer et al. 2006, Lass and Ebert 2006). In
428 contrast, our study presents a rare example of seasonal infections within a focal host (*A. rigaudi*
429 in *A. franciscana*) being caused by the seasonality of an entirely different host (*A.*
430 *parthenogenetica*). We know of one other description of such spillover-driven seasonality.
431 Amman et al. (2012) investigated the prevalence of Marburg virus in bats, which causes severe
432 hemorrhagic disease when it spills over to humans. They found that viral infections in bats
433 peaked during birthing seasons, and that 83% of spillovers to humans occurred during these
434 peaks. Such cases highlight the interconnected nature of communities hosting multi-host
435 parasites, and are obviously of particular interest for the establishment of control strategies.

436 *Extrapolating host contributions from observational data*

437 In this study, we used variation in the composition of natural host communities to investigate
438 how each host contributes to the maintenance of a shared parasite. The strength of this approach
439 is illustrated by the results for *A. rigaudi*: we obtained direct evidence that under natural
440 conditions, it is a spillover parasite dependent on *A. parthenogenetica* and unable to persist in *A.*
441 *franciscana*. This conclusion, which we could not have drawn from tests of infectivity alone, has
442 crucial consequences for our interpretation of the dynamics and evolution of both parasite and
443 host. On the other hand, the results for *E. artemiae* highlight an important weakness of the
444 method, namely that all possible combinations of communities must be sampled in order to
445 obtain conclusive evidence. If one combination does not occur in the field, this constraint is
446 inescapable. In this case, methods based on the construction of full epidemiological models, such
447 as those described by Fenton et al. (2015), may be more useful. These methods first quantify
448 each host's contribution to parasite transmission using observed data on host abundance, parasite
449 prevalence, and parasite shedding; they then infer the consequences for persistence from these
450 results. While these techniques require the accurate measurement of all relevant parameters and
451 an adequate mathematical description of the epidemiology, they are not dependent on wide-scale
452 sampling across communities. Such methods are therefore useful where large-scale sampling is
453 difficult or community composition is invariable, while the natural experiment approach could
454 be particularly suited to highly variable and regularly sampled multi-host systems (e.g. *Daphnia*,
455 Ebert 2008). Independently of the method used, these (and our) studies consistently demonstrate
456 the importance of studying a parasite within its entire host community before making inferences
457 about its host specificity, epidemiological drivers, and selection environment.

458 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

459 The authors thank F. Gout, O. Nougué, E. Flaven, and L.-M. Chevin for help with sampling, E.
460 Flaven for help with testing of sampled *Artemia*, and E. Decaestecker, M. A. Duffy and C. L.
461 Murall for their constructive comments on a previous version of the manuscript. We also thank
462 the Salins d’Aigues-Mortes for access to the saltern. We acknowledge support from the
463 QuantEvol (206734) grant from the European Research Council.

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641 **TABLES**

642 **Table 1.** Sampling sites in the Aigues-Mortes saltern.

Site	GPS coordinates	Salinity classification	<i>n</i> (samples)
Caitive Nord	43° 31' 10.84" N, 4° 14' 26.13" E	middle	3
Caitive Sud	43° 31' 10.47" N, 4° 14' 26.12" E	low	1
Fangouse	43° 30' 16.04" N, 4° 13' 28.75" E	high	6
Pont de Gazette	43° 31' 04.63" N, 4° 10' 48.56" E	low	15
Puit Romain	43° 30' 17.83" N, 4° 13' 27.16" E	middle	6
Site 1	43° 29' 53.03" N, 4° 14' 23.06" E	low	7
Site 3	43° 31' 02.65" N, 4° 14' 29.53" E	low	5
Site 4	43° 32' 24.55" N, 4° 13' 25.90" E	middle	10
Site 5	43° 32' 14.96" N, 4° 12' 41.52" E	(unknown)	1
Site 8	43° 31' 37.17" N, 4° 10' 37.77" E	low	3
Site 9	43° 32' 40.31" N, 4° 09' 16.59" E	high	20
Site 10	43° 32' 40.10" N, 4° 09' 17.16" E	high	3
Site 12	43° 31' 55.66" N, 4° 10' 23.92" E	low	1
St. Louis	43° 32' 56.78" N, 4° 10' 07.95" E	low	5
(unknown)	(unknown)	(unknown)	8

643

644 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

645 **Figure 1.** Using variation in the composition of host communities to categorize multi-host
646 parasites. Given similar environmental conditions, the occurrence (gray squares) or absence
647 (white squares) of persistent parasite populations can lead to direct conclusions regarding the
648 parasite's dependence on its different hosts. Categories following Fenton et al. (2015).

649 **Figure 2.** Seasonality in the Aigues-Mortes saltern. Each point represents one data point;
650 overlapping points shade to black. A) Average monthly temperature between 2008 and 2015.
651 Temperature data was collected at the nearby meteorological station Le Grau-du-Roi –
652 Repausset-Levant (Association Infoclimat 2001). The line traces the mean temperature per
653 month. B) Salinity in the Aigues-Mortes saltern, as recorded at various sites between 2008 and
654 2015 ($n = 193$ observations). The line traces the mean salinity per month. C) Species
655 composition of the *Artemia* community, expressed as the proportion of the population that is *A.*
656 *parthenogenetica* (figure reprinted from Lievens et al. 2016). All but two of the samples were
657 collected in Aigues-Mortes, the remaining two were collected in Gruissan, France (roughly 100
658 km South-West of Aigues-Mortes). The line represents a 2nd-degree polynomial local regression
659 (LOESS) fitting.

660 **Figure 3.** General prevalence patterns of *A. rigaudi* (A & B) and *E. artemiae* (C & D) parasites
661 in *A. parthenogenetica* (A & C) and *A. franciscana* (B & D) hosts. Solid dots are samples; the
662 area of the dot represents the number of individuals in the sample. Overlapping dots shade to
663 black. Solid line: predictions of the general model, represented by the marginal mean (obtained
664 here by averaging over the predictions for all random effects). Using the marginal mean was
665 necessary to compensate for the high variability between samples. Dashed line with open circles:

666 mean prevalence across samples. There is no prevalence data for *A. parthenogenetica* in January
667 and February because this host is absent in winter.

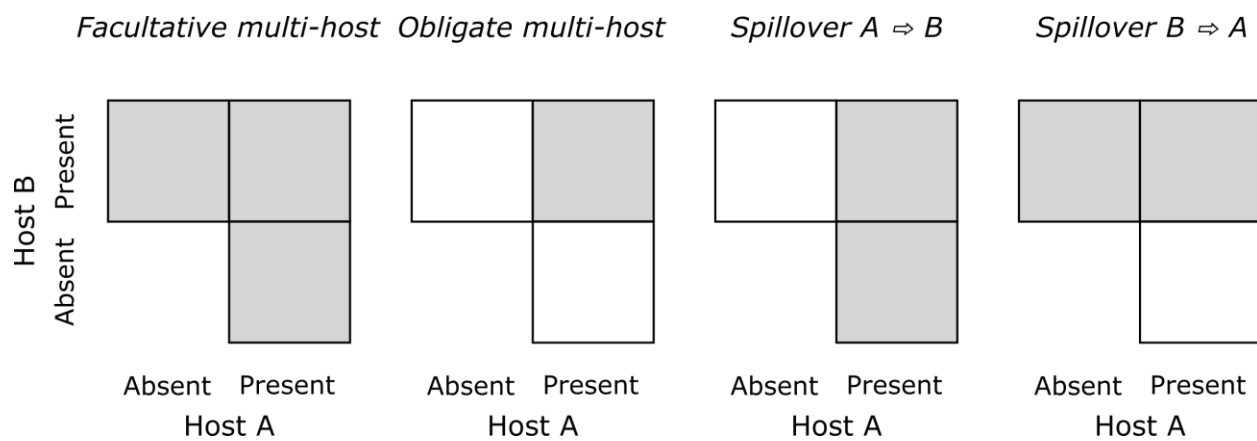
668 **Figure 4.** Decomposition of Fig. 2B: prevalence of *A. rigaudi* in *A. franciscana* when *A.*
669 *parthenogenetica* is present (A) or absent (B). Solid dots are samples; the area of the dot
670 represents the number of individuals in the sample. Overlapping dots shade to black. Solid line:
671 predictions of the best sample-specific model, represented by the marginal mean (obtained here
672 by averaging over the predictions for all random effects). Using the marginal mean was
673 necessary to compensate for the high variability between samples. Dashed line with open circles:
674 mean prevalence across samples.

675 **Figure 5.** Infectivity of *A. rigaudi* (A) and *E. artemiae* (B) as a function of temperature and host
676 type (experiment 1). Individuals were sacrificed and tested after six days of exposure and
677 incubation at 15°C or 25°C. Species/Genotypes were *A. franciscana* (F) and *A. parthenogenetica*
678 isofemale lines P6, P7 and P9. Vertical lines represent the 95% confidence intervals.

679 **Figure 6.** Detection of *A. rigaudi* infections in *A. franciscana* as a function of temperature
680 (experiment 2). Groups of individuals were exposed to *A. rigaudi* and maintained at 15°C or
681 25°C for six or twelve days, after which they were sacrificed and tested. Two groups were
682 exposed and maintained at 15°C for the first six days, and then moved to 25°C for the remaining
683 six days. Vertical lines represent the 95% confidence intervals.

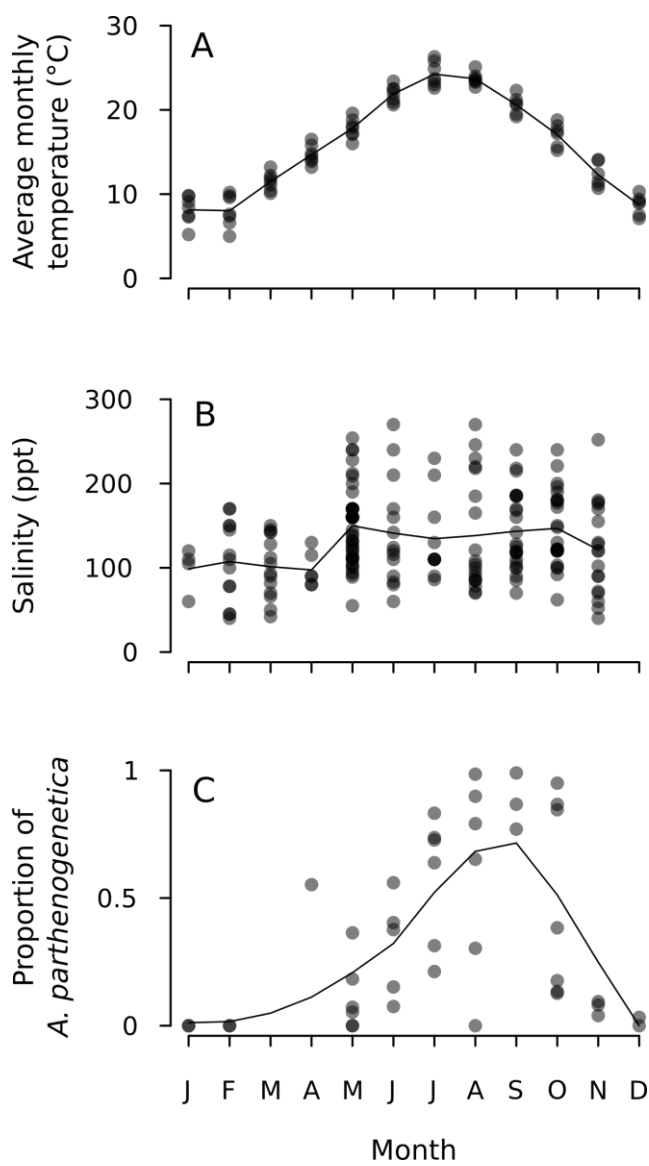
684 **FIGURES**

685 **Figure 1.**



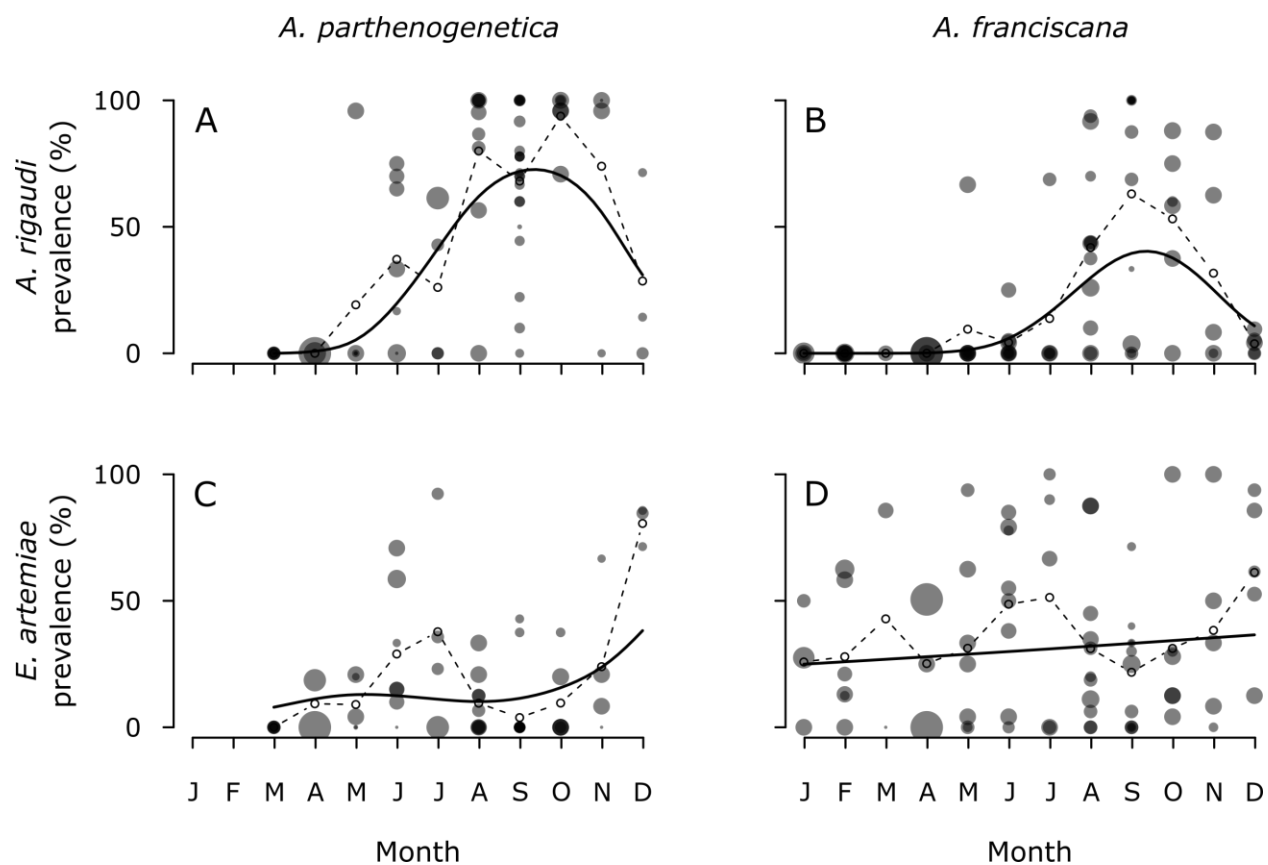
686

687 **Figure 2.**



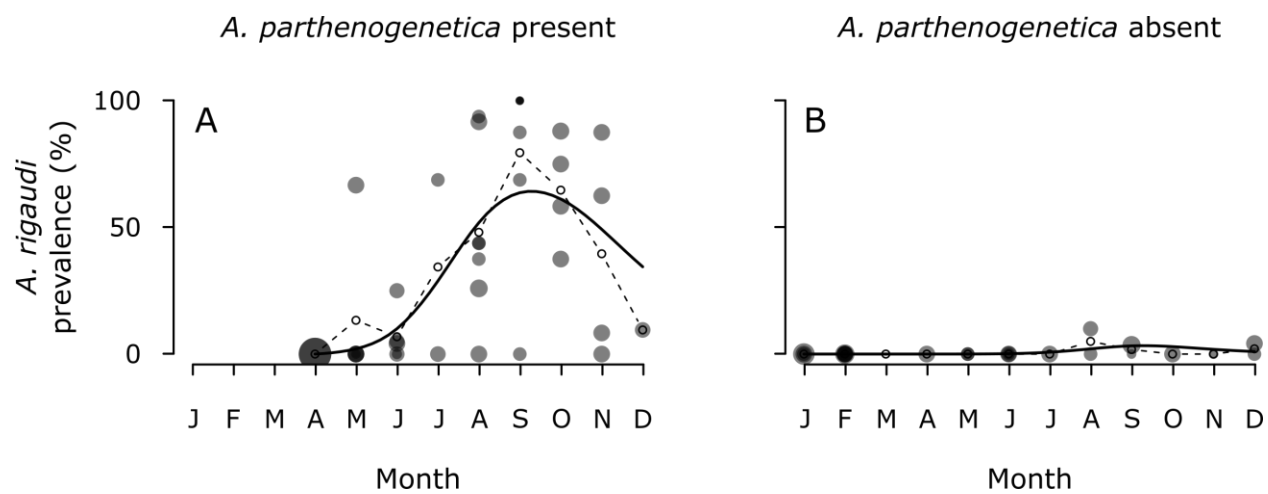
688

689 **Figure 3.**



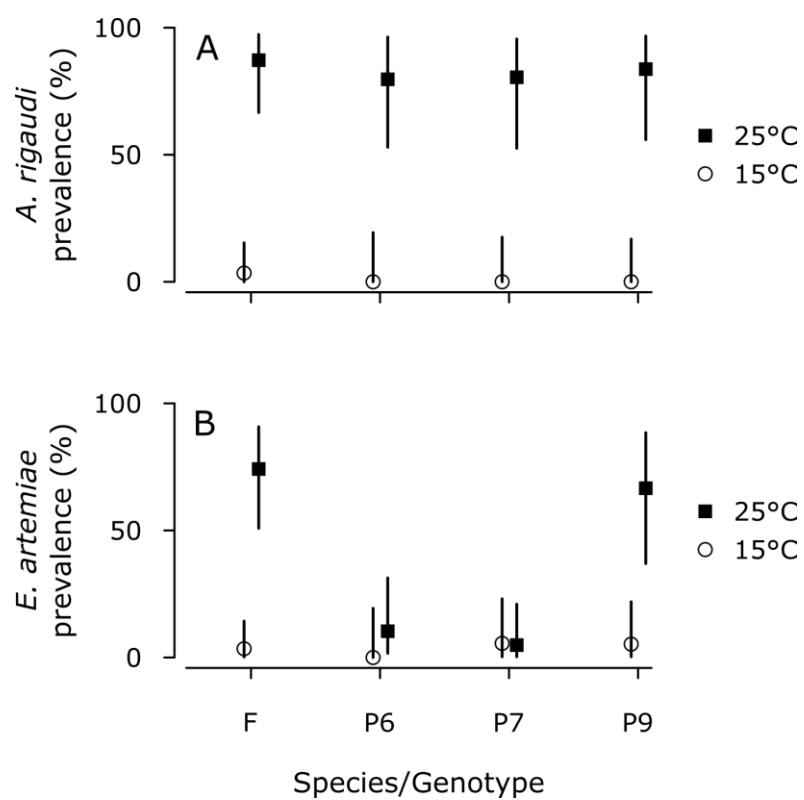
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691 **Figure 4.**



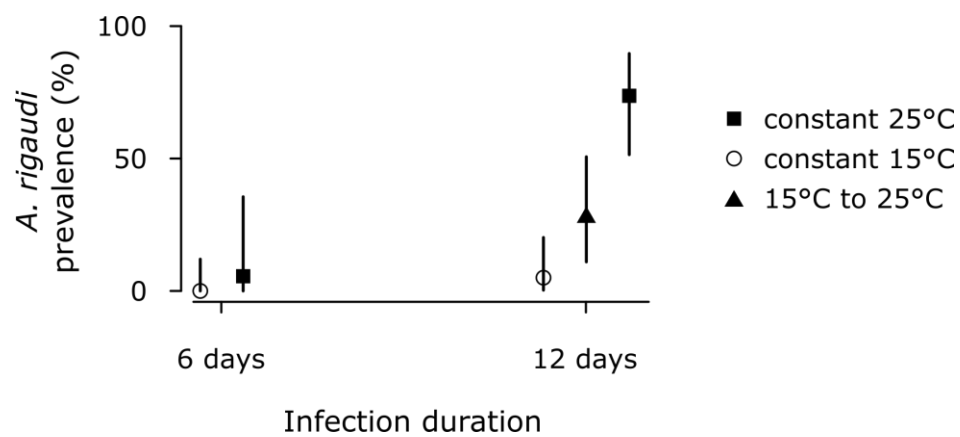
692

693 **Figure 5.**



694

695 **Figure 6.**



696

697 **APPENDICES**

698 **Supplementary Table 1.** Results of the overall models for *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae* infecting
 699 both *Artemia* hosts, before the addition of sample-specific variables. The full models included a
 700 smoothing function of *Month*, *Host species*, and their interaction. All models also included
 701 *Sample* as an individual-level random effect, to control for pseudoreplication. Models were
 702 compared using the difference in corrected AIC (ΔAICc); also provided are the degrees of
 703 freedom used (df) and the Akaike weights (w).

Model	Fixed effects	AICc	ΔAICc	df	w
<i>A. rigaudi</i>					
1	s(Month) + Host species	493.1	0	5	1.00
2 (full model)	s(Month) + Host species + s(Month) : Host species	506.9	13.8	7	0.00
3	Host species	545.8	52.7	3	0.00
4	s(Month)	649.3	156.2	4	0.00
5	-	707.4	214.3	2	0.00
<i>E. artemiae</i>					
1 (full model)	s(Month) + Host species + s(Month) : Host species	594.4	0	7	0.90
2	Host species	599.2	4.8	3	0.08
3	s(Month) + Host species	602.3	7.9	5	0.02
4	-	722.9	128.5	2	0.00
5	s(Month)	723.9	129.5	4	0.00

704

705

706 **Supplementary Table 2.** Results of the sample-specific models for *A. rigaudi* and *E. artemiae*
 707 infecting *A. franciscana*. The full models included the fixed factors of the general model (only
 708 *s(Month)*; *Host species* could not be included because we only used *A. franciscana*), *Presence of*
 709 *A. parthenogenetica*, *Relative salinity*, and their interactions with the smoothing function of
 710 *Month*. All models also included *Sample* as an individual-level random effect, to control for
 711 overdispersion. Models were compared using the difference in corrected AIC (ΔAICc); also
 712 provided are the degrees of freedom used (df) and the the Akaike weights (*w*). Apart from the
 713 general mode, only the models that fell within a cut-off value of $\Delta\text{AICc} = 4$ are shown.

Model	Fixed effects	AICc	ΔAICc	df	<i>w</i>
<i>A. rigaudi</i>					
1	<i>s(Month)</i> + Presence of <i>A. p.</i> + Relative salinity	204.6	0	7	0.61
2	<i>s(Month)</i> + Presence of <i>A. p.</i>	206.7	2.1	5	0.21
...
15 (general model)	<i>s(Month)</i>	224.5	20.0	4	0.00
...
<i>E. artemiae</i>					
1 (general model)	<i>s(Month)</i>	347.7	0	4	0.64
2	<i>s(Month)</i> + Presence of <i>A. p.</i>	349.7	2.1	5	0.23
...

714