Wolbachia both aids and hampers the performance of spider mites

on different host plants

Flore Zélé[1*], Joaquim L. Santos[1], Diogo Prino Godinho[1] and Sara Magalhães[1]

[1]cE3c: centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental changes; Faculdade de Ciencias; Universidade de Lisboa, Edificio C2, Piso-3, Campo Grande, 1749-016 Lisbon, Portugal

[*] Corresponding author: email: fezele@fc.ul.pt

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Abstract

In the last decades, many studies had revealed the potential role of arthropod bacterial endosymbionts in shaping the host range of generalist herbivores and their performance on different host plants, which, in turn, might affect endosymbiont distribution in herbivores populations. We tested this by measuring the prevalence of endosymbionts in natural populations of the generalist spider mite *Tetranychus urticae* on different host plants. Focusing on *Wolbachia*, we then analysed how symbionts affected mite life-history traits on the same host-plants in the laboratory. Overall, the prevalences of *Cardinium* and *Rickettsia* were low, whereas that of *Wolbachia* was high, with the highest values on bean and eggplant and the lowest on purple, tomato and zuchini. Although most mite life-history traits were affected by the plant species only, *Wolbachia* infection was detrimental for egg hatching rate on purple and zucchini, and led to a more female-biased sex ratio on purple and eggplant. These results suggest that endosymbionts may affect the host range of polyphagous herbivores, both by aiding and hampering their performance, depending on the host plant and on the life-history trait that affects performance the most. Conversely, endosymbiont spread may be facilitated or hindered by the plants on which infected herbivores occur.

16   **INTRODUCTION**

17   Although generalist herbivores are able to colonize several host plants, their performance on

18   different host plants is variable. Whereas some studies suggest that the host range of herbivores is

19   mostly determined by geographical location (Calatayud *et al.*, 2016), others suggest that this range is

20   determined by host-plant nutritional quality (Schoonhoven *et al.*, 2005) or host-plant defences

21   (Becerra, 1997). Still, the proximate mechanisms allowing populations to colonize particular host

22   plants remain elusive.

23   Herbivores harbour a rich community of microorganisms, ranging from their gut microbiota

24   and intracellular vertically-transmitted endosymbionts to plant bacteria and viruses of which they

25   serve as vectors, and there is growing evidence of the impact of such communities on herbivore

26   performance on plants (Hosokawa *et al.*, 2007, Clark *et al.*, 2010, Frago *et al.*, 2012, Hansen & Moran,

27   2014, Oliver & Martinez, 2014, Zhu *et al.*, 2014, Shikano *et al.*, 2017). Obvious candidates to influence

28   plant colonization by herbivorous arthropods are their heritable endosymbionts (Clark *et al.*, 2010,

29   Feldhaar, 2011, Ferrari & Vavre, 2011, Frago *et al.*, 2012, Jaenike, 2015). Due to their vertical mode

30   of transmission, the fitness of such symbionts is tightly linked to that of their host and they are likely

31   to benefit their host in order to increase their own transmission (Fine, 1975). Indeed, endosymbionts

32   have been shown to affect the host-plant range of herbivorous arthropods (Hosokawa *et al.*, 2007,

33   Tsuchida *et al.*, 2011, Sugio *et al.*, 2015, Wagner *et al.*, 2015, Giron *et al.*, 2017) or to increase

34   performance on certain plant species (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2001, Leonardo & Muiru, 2003, Ferrari *et al.*,

35   2004, Tsuchida *et al.*, 2004, Ferrari *et al.*, 2007, Hosokawa *et al.*, 2007, Su *et al.*, 2013, Su *et al.*, 2015,

36   Wagner *et al.*, 2015), while decreasing performance on others (Chen *et al.*, 2000, Leonardo & Muiru,

37   2003, Ferrari *et al.*, 2007, Chandler *et al.*, 2008, McLean *et al.*, 2011, Wagner *et al.*, 2015). In some

38   cases, increased host performance is due to endosymbionts acting as nutritional mutualists, directly

39   supplying their arthropod hosts with nutrients or enzymes that are missing in their plant diet

40   (reviewed by Chaves *et al.*, 2009, Douglas, 2009), or displaying compensatory effects during periods

41   of nutritional deficiency (Su *et al.*, 2014). Finally, endosymbionts may also enable arthropods to

42   manipulate phytohormonal profiles (Kaiser *et al.*, 2010, Body *et al.*, 2013), resource allocation

43   (Hackett *et al.*, 2013), and anti-herbivory defences (Barr *et al.*, 2010, Su *et al.*, 2015). Conversely,

44   symbiont-mediated decreased host performance on particular plants might be due to the nutrient

45   profile (e.g., specific amino acids and nitrogen content) of these plants, which promotes deleterious

46   symbiont traits and disturbs the host control over bacterial abundance (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2007,

47   Chandler *et al.*, 2008).

48   Such variable effects of endosymbionts on herbivore plant use may contribute to variation in

49   the abundance and distribution of herbivorous arthropods (Douglas, 2009, Hansen & Moran, 2014).

50   Conversely, as symbiont-herbivore interactions may differ according to the host plant, and nutrition

51 of herbivore host can affect the within-host symbiont density (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2001, Wilkinson *et al.*,

52 2007, Chandler *et al.*, 2008, Zhang *et al.*, 2016), the host plant can also affect endosymbiont

53 distribution in the field (Leonardo & Muiru, 2003, Simon *et al.*, 2003, Ferrari *et al.*, 2004, Tsuchida *et*

54 *al.*, 2004, Chandler *et al.*, 2008, Ahmed *et al.*, 2010, Brady & White, 2013, Pan *et al.*, 2013, Guidolin &

55 Consoli, 2017). However, most studies addressing these questions have been conducted on sap-

56 feeding insects and whether symbiont prevalence and their effects on their herbivorous host vary

57 with the host plant remains unstudied in other systems.

58   The two-spotted spider mite *Tetranychus urticae*, a cosmopolitan agricultural and

59 horticultural pest that feeds on cell content, is a highly polyphagous arthropod, feeding on more than

60 1100 plant species (Migeon & Dorkeld, 2006-2017). This generalist herbivore rapidly adapts to novel

61 host plants (Fry, 1990, Agrawal, 2000, Magalhães *et al.*, 2007), sometimes forming host races

62 (Magalhães *et al.*, 2007), and may harbour several endosymbiontic bacteria with variable prevalence

63 among populations (Enigl & Schausberger, 2007, Gotoh *et al.*, 2007, Staudacher *et al.*, 2017). Among

64 them, *Wolbachia* is the most prevalent (Liu *et al.*, 2006, Gotoh *et al.*, 2007, Ros & Breeuwer, 2009,

65 Zhang *et al.*, 2016, Zélé *et al.*, 2018) and induces variable fitness effects in spider mites. For

66 instance, it can decrease (Perrot-Minnot *et al.*, 2002, Suh *et al.*, 2015), not affect (Breeuwer, 1997,

67 Vala *et al.*, 2000, Perrot-Minnot *et al.*, 2002, Vala *et al.*, 2002, Gotoh *et al.*, 2007), or increase (Vala *et*

68 *al.*, 2002, Gotoh *et al.*, 2007, Xie *et al.*, 2011) their fecundity. Given these variable effects, it is as yet

69 unclear whether *Wolbachia* will facilitate or hamper host-plant colonization by spider mites.

70   Here, we measured the prevalence of the three most prevalent endosymbionts of *T. urticae*,

71 namely *Wolbachia*, *Cardinium*, and *Rickettsia*, on five different host plants in Portugal. Subsequently,

72 we explored whether the effect of *Wolbachia* on the performance of *T. urticae* hinges on the plant

73 that is being colonized. Finally, we discuss the importance of possible mechanisms leading to our

74 results as well as the potential adaptive significance of the presence of *Wolbachia* for plant

75 colonization by *T. urticae*.

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78 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

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80 **Effect of the host plant on endosymbiont prevalence in the field**

81 To determine whether the prevalence of *Wolbachia, Cardinium* and *Rickettsia* in natural *T. urticae*

82 populations varied with the host plant, spider mites were collected on bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*,

83 Fabaceae), eggplant (*Solanum melongena*, Solenaceae), purple morning glory (*Ipomoea purpurea*,

84 Convolvulaceae, hereafter "purple"), zucchini (*Cucurbita pepo*, Cucurbitaceae), and tomato (*Solanum*

85 *lycopersicum*, Solenaceae) across 12 different locations (Table 1). These plants were selected because

86   they are part of the natural host range of *T. urticae* but belong to different families. Sampling sites

87   consisted of open fields, greenhouses or organic vegetable gardens, while being insecticide/pesticide

88   free to avoid this potential confounding effect. Infested leaves were detached and placed in closed

89   plastic boxes that were brought to the laboratory. On the same day, 50 adult females were

90   haphazardly picked from each population and their species determined at the individual level based

91   on morphological characteristics under a binocular microscope. These females were then placed on 2

92   cm^2 leaf discs of the same plant species on which they were found, and allowed to lay eggs for 4

93   days. Subsequently, 20 of these females were randomly selected and individually tested for the

94   presence of *Wolbachia*, *Cardinium* and *Rickettsia* on entire mites without DNA extraction by

95   multiplex PCR using genus-specific primers as described in (Zélé *et al.*, 2018). Subsequently, for each

96   population, the DNA of a pool consisting of one daughter from each of these females was extracted,

97   then a PCR-based method to identify the mite species was performed by multiplex PCR as described

98   in (Zélé *et al.*, 2018). If a pool could not be assigned unambiguously to *T. urticae* (see Table S1 in

99   Additional file 1), all data concerning endosymbiont prevalence were discarded. This process was

100   repeated until obtaining endosymbiont prevalence data for 5 populations per plant, except for

101   purple, for which we could obtain only 2 populations of *T. urticae* due to the weak infestation rate of

102   this plant by this spider-mite species, and despite a large sampling effort (Table S1).

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104   **Table 1.** *Tetranychus urticae* populations collected on five different host plants across 12 different locations in

105   June-July 2015 and used to study the plant effect on the prevalence of *Wolbachia*, *Cardinium* and *Rickettsia*.

Host plant	Name	Date	Location	Coordinates
Bean	B1	08-06-2015	Hortas da Cortesia, São João das Lampas	38.865278, -9.384006
(*Phaseolus vulgaris*)	B2	08-06-2015	Pêro Pinheiro	38.851900, -9.326903
	B6	10-06-2015	Correias	39.342914, -8.797936
	B7	10-06-2015	Biofrade, Lourinhã	39.258314, -9.294675
	B8	10-06-2015	Aromas do Outeiro, Carregado	39.026500, -8.982278
Eggplant	E3	10-06-2015	Aromas do Outeiro, Carregado	39.026500, -8.982278
(*Solanum melongena*)	E4	10-06-2015	Ribeira de Fráguas	39.366414, -8.851036
	E5	10-06-2015	Biofrade, Lourinhã	39.258314, -9.294675
	E6	15-06-2015	Alvalade, Lisbon	38.755283, -9.147203
	E7	16-06-2015	Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais, Lisbon	38.762897, -9.112419
Purple	P5	14-06-2015	Alvalade, Lisbon	38.755283, -9.147203
(*Ipomoea purpurea*)	P13	08-07-2015	Fernão Ferro	38.580006, -9.102147
Tomato	T1	08-06-2015	Hortas da Cortesia, São João das Lampas	38.865278, -9.384006
(*Solanum lycopersicum*)	T3	10-06-2015	Aromas do Outeiro, Carregado	39.026500, -8.982278
	T5	13-06-2015	Campo Grande, Lisbon	38.755775, -9.156075
	T6	16-06-2015	Campo Pequeno, Lisbon	38.744336, -9.144289
	T7	16-06-2015	Quinta Pedagógica dos Olivais, Lisbon	38.762897, -9.112419
Zucchini	Z1	08-06-2015	Hortas da Cortesia, São João das Lampas	38.865278, -9.384006
(*Cucurbita pepo*)	Z2	09-06-2015	Quinta do Poial, Galeotas	38.536103, -9.000375
	Z5	10-06-2015	Correias	39.342914, -8.797936
	Z6	10-06-2015	Ribeira de Fráguas	39.366414, -8.851036
	Z7	10-06-2015	Aromas do Outeiro, Carregado	39.026500, -8.982278

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108 **Effect of *Wolbachia*, the host plant, and their interaction on the performance of spider mites**

109 *Spider mite populations, tetracycline treatment and population rearing*

110 The spider-mite population used was originally collected on *Datura* plants at Aldeia da Mata

111 Pequena, Portugal, in November 2013 and kept in a mass-rearing environment (>5 000 individuals)

112 on bean plants (var. *Enana*), under controlled conditions (25°C, photoperiod of 16L:8D) since then.

113 This population, hereafter called Wi, was found uninfected by *Rickettsia*, *Spiroplasma* or

114 *Arsenophonus* but fully infected by *Wolbachia* in the field (Zélé *et al.*, 2018). Although this population

115 was also slightly infected by *Cardinium* (Zélé *et al.*, 2018), this endosymbiont has been rapidly lost

116 following laboratory rearing (unpublished data). To obtain a *Wolbachia*-uninfected (Wu) population

117 with a similar genetic background, roughly 3 months after collection 30 adult females of the Wi

118 population were placed in petri dishes containing bean leaf fragments placed on cotton with a

119 tetracycline solution (0.1 %, w/v). This treatment was applied continuously for three successive

120 generations (Breeuwer, 1997), then the population was maintained in a mass-rearing environment

121 without antibiotics for c.a. 12 generations before the experiment to avoid (or limit) potential side

122 effects of the antibiotic treatment (e.g. O'Shea & Singh, 2015) and allow mites to recover potential

123 loss of gut. Before use, up to 20 individual females and pools of 100 females were checked by PCR to

124 confirm the absence and presence of *Wolbachia* infection in Wu and Wi populations, respectively.

125

126 *Performance of Wolbachia-infected and uninfected females on different host plant*

127 To determine the effect of *Wolbachia* infection and of the host plant, as well as their possible

128 interaction, on the performance of *T. urticae*, we measured life history traits of individuals from Wi

129 or Wu populations when placed on the same plant species as those from which mites were collected

130 in the field study (bean: var. *Enana*, eggplant: var. *Larga Morada*, purple: var. *Vigorous*, zucchini: var.

131 *Bellezza Negra*, and tomato: var. Money Maker). To control for age, 100 females were allowed to lay

132 eggs for three days on detached bean leaves placed on water-soaked cotton, and the adult females

133 resulting from those eggs were used in the experiments. Fifty mated females (10-13 days old) were

134 haphazardly picked from either Wi or Wu cohorts and placed individually on a 2 cm^2 leaf disc from

135 one of the 5 different host plants. The replicates were distributed along 5 temporal blocks (10

136 replicates per treatment per day during 5 consecutive days). Females that were alive after 3 days

137 were transferred to new leaf discs where they could lay eggs for another 3 days. Their survival (S) and

138 the proportion of drowned females in the water-soaked cotton (i.e. accidental death of females

139 trying to escape the leaf discs; PD) were followed daily during six days. The fecundity of each female

140 was measured at days 3 and 6 and the average female daily fecundity was estimated taking into

141 account their daily mortality (DF = total number of eggs laid per female / number of days the female

142 was alive). The number of unhatched eggs was counted 5 days later (i.e. days 8 and 11, respectively)

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143   to estimate the hatching rate (HR = hatched eggs / total number of eggs). Adult offspring (F_1 females

144   + F_1 males) was counted after 6 additional days (i.e. days 14 and 17, respectively) and used to

145   estimate juvenile mortality (JM = [total number of eggs - number of unhatched eggs - number of F_1

146   adults]/ total number of eggs), F_1 sex ratio (SR = number of F_1 males/number of F_1 adults) and the

147   number of viable offspring (VO = total number of adult offspring per female per treatment observed

148   at the end of the experiment on each plant). The entire experiment was repeated three months later

149   (hereafter called blocks 1 and 2) except for replicates involving tomato plants. Indeed, given a very

150   high proportion of drowned females (88 ± 3.3 %; data not shown) and because the surviving females

151   laid on average less than 1 egg per day (0.32 ± 0.05; data not shown) on this plant, subsequent traits

152   could not be measured and we decided to exclude it from this experiment.

153

154   **Statistical analyses**

155   Analyses were carried out using the R statistical package (v. 3.3.2). The different statistical models

156   built to analyse the effect of host-plant on endosymbiont prevalence in field-collected spider-mite

157   populations and the effects of *Wolbachia* on different host plants are described in the electronic

158   supplementary material (Additional file 1), Table S2.

159   To analyse the effect of host plants on endosymbiont prevalence in field-collected mites, the

160   prevalence of *Wolbachia* (model 1)*, Cardinium* (model 2) and *Rickettsia* (model 3) were fit as binary

161   response variables, the host plant on which mites were collected as fixed explanatory variable, and

162   the location as random explanatory variable. Because of quasi-complete separation of some of our

163   data, which usually causes problems with estimated regression coefficients, analyses were conducted

164   using a mixed model bglmer procedure (blme package) with a binomial error distribution (Pasch *et*

165   *al.*, 2013). When the variable "plant" was significant, a stepwise *a posteriori* procedure (Crawley,

166   2007) to determine differences between plants was carried out by aggregating factor levels together

167   and by testing the fit of the simplified model using a likelihood ratio test (LRT), which is

168   approximately distributed as a χ^2 distribution (Bolker, 2008). Because none of the mites collected in

169   this study were singly infected by *Cardnium* or *Rickettsia*, and the prevalence of each type of

170   coinfection was very low (cf. Results), we did not have enough statistical power to study the effect of

171   the host plants on the prevalence of coinfections.

172   To analyse the effect of *Wolbachia*, the host plant, and their interaction on the performance

173   of spider mites, the infection status of females (i.e. Wi: infected or Wu: uninfected) and the host

174   plants tested were fit as fixed explanatory variables, whereas block and day were fit as random

175   explanatory variables (day nested within block). Survival data (S; model 4) were analysed using a Cox

176   proportional hazards mixed-effect model (coxme, kinship package). Hazard ratios were obtained

177   from this model as an estimate of the difference in mortality rate (Crawley, 2007) between our

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178   control (Wi population on bean) and each of the other factor levels. PD, a binary response variable

179   (drowned or not; model 5), was analysed using a generalized linear mixed model with a binomial

180   distribution (glmer, lme4 package). DF, a continuous response variable (model 6) was analysed using

181   linear mixed-effect models (lmer, nlme package). The other proportion variables HR, SR and JM

182   (models 7, 8, and 9, respectively) were computed using the function cbind (e.g. number of hatched

183   eggs, males, or dead juveniles *vs*. number of unhatched eggs, females, or alive juveniles,

184   respectively). However, due to the low daily fecundity of spider mites, these variables, as well as VO

185   (model 10) were greatly over-dispersed. One way of handling this over-dispersion is by using

186   quasibinomial or negative binomial pseudo distributions (Crawley, 2007) but, to our knowledge, this

187   is not possible within the usual mixed model *glmer* procedure. Thus, we used instead a mixed model

188   glmmadmb procedure (glmmADMB package) with zero-inflated binomial error distribution for HR, SR

189   and JM, and zero-inflated negative binomial error distribution for VO. When a statistically significant

190   interaction between the variables "*Wolbachia*" (Wi or Wu) and "plant" was found, the effect of

191   *Wolbachia* was analysed for each plant separately. When only the variable "plant" was significant, *a*

192   *posteriori* contrasts between host plants were performed as before.

193   For all analyses, maximal models were simplified by sequentially eliminating non-significant

194   terms to establish a minimal model (Crawley, 2007), and the significance of the explanatory variables

195   was established using χ^2-tests or *F-tests* to account for overdispersion (Bolker, 2008). The significant

196   values given in the text are for the minimal model, while non-significant values correspond to those

197   obtained before deletion of the variable from the model (Crawley, 2007). Full datasets are given in

198   Additional files 2 and 3.

199

200

201   **RESULTS**

202

203   **Effect of the host plant on endosymbiont prevalence in the field**

204   The prevalence of *Wolbachia* was overall high (92.7 ± 1.2 %), while that of *Cardinium* (2.5 ± 0.7 %)

205   and *Rickettsia* (2.0 ± 0.7 %) were low (Fig. 1). In addition, while 89.3 ± 1.5 % of the mites collected in

206   this study were infected by *Wolbachia* only, none were infected by *Cardinium* or by *Rickettsia* only.

207   1.4 ± 0.6 % were coinfected by *Wolbachia* and *Cardinium*, 0.9 ± 0.5 % were coinfected by *Wolbachia*

208   and *Rickettsia*, and 1.14 ± 0.5 % where infected by these three endosymbionts (see Fig. S1 in

209   Additional file 1 for infection statuses at the individual level). The prevalence of *Wolbachia* and of

210   *Rickettsia* were affected by the plant on which *T. urticae* females were collected (X^2_4=14.79, p=0.005;

211   model 1, and X^2_4=12.71, p=0.01; model 3, respectively; Fig. 1). Contrast analyses revealed that the

212   prevalence of *Wolbachia* was higher on bean and eggplant (97.0 ± 1.7 %; *contrast bean vs eggplant*:

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213   X^2_1=0.51, p=0.47) than on the 3 other plants (89.2 ± 2.0 %; *Contrast purple vs tomato vs zucchini*:

214   X^2_2=0.39, p=0.82; *Contrast between the two groups of plants*: X^2_1=14.34, p=0.0002), and that of

215   *Rickettsia* differed only on purple (12.5 ± 5.3 %) compared to all other plants (1.0 ± 0.5 %; *contrast*

216   *bean vs eggplant vs tomato vs zucchini*: X^2_3=2.95, p=0.40; *Contrast between this group of plants and*

217   *purple*: X^2_1=9.76, p=0.002). Finally, the prevalence of *Cardinium*, similarly to that of *Rickettsia*, tended

218   to be higher on purple (12.5 ± 5.3 %) compared to the other plants (1.5 ± 0.6 %), but this effect was

219   not statistically significant (X^2_4=1.61, p=0.81; model 2).
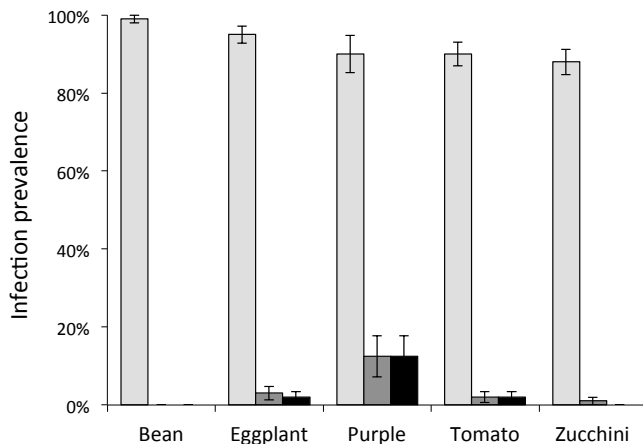
Figure 1. Endosymbiont prevalence in *T. urticae* females collected on different host plants. Bars represent the mean (± s.e.) infection frequencies by *Wolbachia* (light grey), *Cardinium* (dark grey), and *Rickettsia* (black) for several spider mite populations collected on bean (n=5), eggplant (n=5), purple (n=2), tomato (n=5), and zucchini (n=5).

230

231   **Effect of *Wolbachia*, the host plant, and their interaction on the performance of spider mites**

232   Overall, there was no significant effect of *Wolbachia* (X^2_1= 0.73, p=0.39), of host plants (X^2_3= 6.84,

233   p=0.07), or of their interaction (X^2_3= 3.34, p=0.34; model 4; Table 1 and Fig. S2 in Additional file 1) on

234   survival (**S**) over the 6 first days of the experiment. However, host plants affected significantly the

235   proportion of drowned mites (PD; X^2_3= 23.14, p<0.0001), regardless of *Wolbachia* infection

236   (*Wolbachia* effect: X^2_1= 1.35, p=0.25; *Wolbachia*-plant interaction: X^2_3=0.70, p=0.87; model 5; Table

237   2).

238   Daily fecundity (DF) was significantly affected by host plants (X^2_3=129.33, p<0.0001), but not

239   by *Wolbachia* (X^2_1=2.06, p=0.15) or its interaction with the plant (X^2_3=1.21, p=0.75; model 6; table 2).

240   Contrast analyses revealed that DF was similar on purple and zucchini (3.37 ± 0.11 eggs per day;

241   *contrast purple vs zucchini*: X^2_1=1.03, p=0.31), but higher on bean (4.60 ± 0.19 eggs per day; *contrast*

242   *purple-zucchini vs bean*: X^2_1=40.14, p<0.0001), and lower on eggplant (2.10 ± 0.13; *Contrast eggplant*

243   *vs purple-zucchini*: X^2_1=42.77, p<0.0001).

244   The effect of *Wolbachia* on egg hatching rate (HR) depended on the host plant tested

245   (*Wolbachia*-plant interaction: $F_{3,697}$=5.47, p=0.001; model 7; Table 1 and Fig. 2). Indeed, *Wolbachia*

246   reduced HR on purple ($F_{1,172}$=10.05, p=0.002) and on zucchini ($F_{1,177}$=19.74, p<0.0001), but had no

247   effect on bean and eggplant ($F_{1,181}$=1.42, p=0.24 and $F_{1,158}$=1.56, p=0.21, respectively).

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Table 2. Effect of *Wolbachia* and of host plants on the performance of spider mites. Mean (± s.e.) values of both *Wolbachia*-infected (Wi) and uninfected (Wu) *T. urticae* on the different plants studied (bean, purple, zucchini and eggplant) are represented for each one of the performance traits measured in this study. For hatching rate, juvenile mortality and sex ratio, estimates were obtained from the GLMM statistical models and take into account variation among females, as well as the correction for zero-inflation and day within block as random effect.

| Variable of interest	Bean		Purple		Zucchini		Eggplant		Significance of explanatory variables and their interaction		
	Wi	Wu	Wi	Wu	Wi	Wu	Wi	Wu	Plant * *Wolbachia*	Plant	*Wolbachia*
Log Hazard Ratio (S)	-	0.15 ± 0.21	-0.03 ± 0.22	-0.21 ± 0.31	-0.06 ± 0.23	-0.59 ± 0.32	0.18 ± 0.22	-0.28 ± 0.30	X^2_3=3.34, p=0.34	X^2_3=6.84, p=0.08	X^2_1=0.88, p=0.35
Proportion of drowned (PD)	0.16 ± 0.04	0.13 ± 0.03	0.26 ± 0.04	0.22 ± 0.04	0.34 ± 0.05	0.26 ± 0.04	0.34± 0.05	0.34 ± 0.05	X^2_3=0.70, p=0.87	X^2_3= 23.14, p<0.0001	X^2_1= 1.35, p=0.25
Daily fecundity (DF)	4.76 ± 0.27	4.43 ± 0.26	3.54 ± 0.24	3.42 ± 0.21	3.26 ± 0.22	3.25 ± 0.22	2.32 ± 0.21	1.88 ± 0.15	X^2_3=1.21, p=0.75	X^2_3=129.33, p<0.0001	X^2_1=2.06, p=0.15
Hatching rate (HR)	0.97 ± 0.01	0.96 ± 0.01	0.96 ± 0.01	0.98 ± 0.01	0.92 ± 0.01	0.95 ± 0.01	0.94 ± 0.01	0.93 ± 0.02	$F_{3,697}$=5.47, p=0.001	-	-
Juvenile mortality (JM)	0.18 ± 0.03	0.20 ± 0.01	0.12 ± 0.01	0.11 ± 0.01	0.19 ± 0.02	0.16 ± 0.02	0.32 ± 0.02	0.27 ± 0.03	$F_{3,689}$=1.85, p=0.14	$F_{3,693}$=48.23, p<0.0001	$F_{1,692}$=0.01, p=0.92
Sex ratio (SR)	0.19 ± 0.01	0.20 ± 0.01	0.21 ± 0.01	0.24 ± 0.02	0.21 ± 0.02	0.23 ± 0.02	0.17 ± 0.02	0.24 ± 0.03	$F_{3,681}$=2.48, p=0.04	-	-
Viable offspring (VO)	19.03 ± 1.33	17.45 ± 1.28	14.49 ± 1.23	14.44 ± 1.12	10.89 ± 0.98	12.80 ± 1.03	6.78 ± 0.74	5.5 ± 0.54	$F_{3,786}$=0.70, p=0.55	$F_{3,790}$=48.72, p<0.0001	$F_{1,789}$=0.78, p=0.38
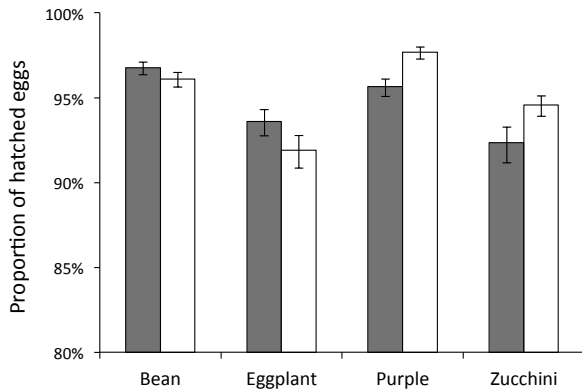
Figure 2. Effects of different host plants and of *Wolbachia* on the hatching rate of *T. urticae* eggs. Bars represent the mean (± s.e.) proportions of hatched eggs laid by *Wolbachia*-infected (Wi; grey bars) and uninfected (Wu; white bars) females on different host plants. Estimates were obtained from the GLMM statistical model that takes into account variation of fecundity among females, day within block as random effect, and corrects for zero-inflation. Standard errors were obtained from the upper and lower confidence intervals given by the model.

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12   Juvenile mortality (JM) was not significantly affected by *Wolbachia* ($F_{1,692}=0.01$, p=0.92;

13   model 8; Table 2), and this was consistent across all host plants (*Wolbachia*-plant interaction:

14   $F_{3,689}=1.85$, p=0.14; model 8). However, host plant was a significant predictor of JM ($F_{3,693}=48.23$,

15   p<0.0001; model 8). Bean and zucchini did not differ significantly from each other (contrast bean vs

16   zucchini: $X^2_1=0.72$, p=0.40) and led to intermediate JM of 16.8 ± 0.9%, while purple decreased it by

17   5.2 ± 1.5% (contrast purple vs bean-zucchini: $X^2_1=53.82$, p<0.0001), and eggplant increased it by 11.3

18   ± 2.1% (contrast bean-zucchini vs eggplant: $X^2_1=109.36$, p<0.0001).

19   *Wolbachia* infection affected differently the sex ratio (SR) produced on the different plants

20   (*Wolbachia*-plant interaction: $F_{3,681}=2.48$, p=0.04; model 9; Table 2 and Fig. 3). Indeed, *Wolbachia*

21   decreased the proportion of males on purple ($F_{1,168}=5.51$, p=0.02) and on eggplant ($F_{1,153}=8.54$,

22   p=0.004). On bean and zucchini, however, SR did not differ significantly between Wi and Wu mites

23   ($F_{1,179}=5.51$, p=0.54 and $F_{1,1726}=2.28$, p=0.13, respectively).
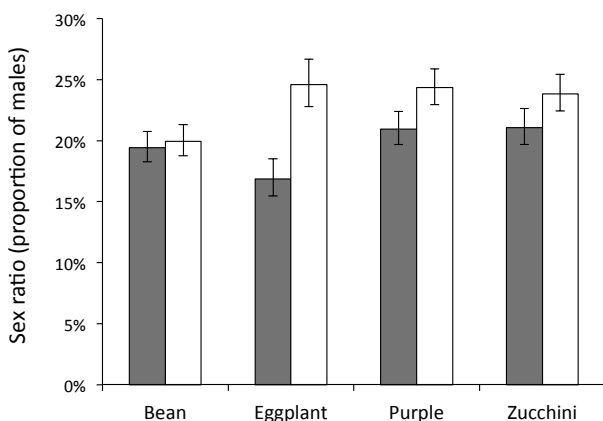
24

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Figure 3. Effects of different host plants and of *Wolbachia* on the offspring sex ratio produced by *T. urticae* females. Bars represent the mean (± s.e.) proportions of male offspring produced by *Wolbachia*-infected (Wi; grey bars) and uninfected (Wu; white bars) females on different host plants. Estimates were obtained from the GLMM statistical model that takes into account variation of fecundity among females, day within block as random effect, and corrects for zero-inflation. Standard errors were obtained from the upper and lower confidence intervals given by the model.

37

38   Although we found a significant *Wolbachia*-plant interaction on HR and SR, *Wolbachia* did

39   not significantly influence the average number of viable offspring (VO; $F_{1,789}=0.78$, p=0.38), and this

40   effect was independent of the host plant (*Wolbachia*-plant interaction: $F_{3,786}=0.70$, p=0.55; model 10;

41   Table 2 and Fig. 4). Nonetheless, host plant significantly explained this trait ($F_{3,790}=48.72$, p<0.0001;

42   model 10), with the highest values on bean, intermediate values on purple (*contrast purple* vs *bean*:

43    $X^2_1=4.82$, p=0.03) and zucchini (*contrast zucchini vs purple*: $X^2_1=5.12$, p=0.02), and the lowest values

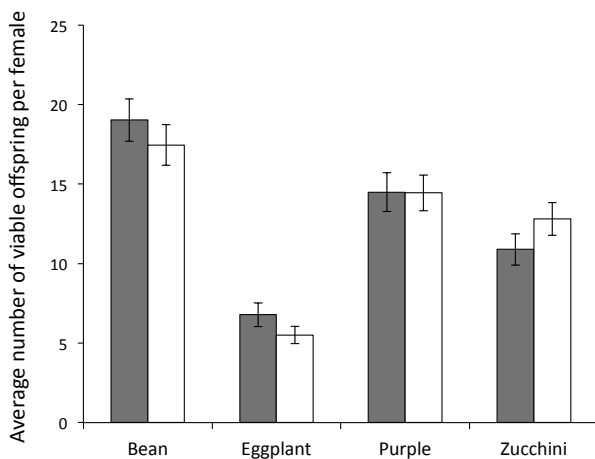44   on eggplant (*contrast eggplant* vs *zucchini*: $X^2_1=44$, p<0.0001).

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Figure 4. Effects of different host plants and of *Wolbachia* on the average number of viable offspring per female. Bars represent the mean (± s.e.) numbers of offspring (grey: sons; white: daughters) produced by *Wolbachia*-infected (Wi; grey bars) and uninfected (Wu; white bars) females on different host plants.

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58

59   **DISCUSSION**

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61   In this study, we confirmed that *Wolbachia* is highly prevalent in *T. urticae* in Portugal, while

62   *Cardinium* and *Rickettsia* were found at low prevalences (Zélé *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, this study

63   suggests that endosymbiont prevalence varied with the host plant, *Cardinium* and *Rickettsia* being

64   more prevalent on purple (although non-significantly for *Cardinium*) than on the other plants, and

65   *Wolbachia* being more prevalent on bean and eggplant than on tomato, purple and zucchini. In the

66   laboratory, *Wolbachia*-infected eggs had a lower hatching rate than uninfected ones on purple and

67   zucchini, while this was not the case on bean and eggplant.

68   The prevalence of *Wolbachia* and *Rickettsia* in *T. urticae* females found in this study was

69   relatively similar to that of an earlier study in the same geographical area (Zélé *et al.*, 2018).

70   However, the prevalence of *Cardinium* was about five times lower in the current study than in the

71   former one (2.5 ± 0.7 % *vs* 13.6 ± 2.9 %, respectively). As the populations were sampled on

72   comparable host plants in this previous study (except for one population collected on *Datura*

12

73   *stramonium*, the others were collected on bean, eggplant, tomato and zucchini), the discrepancy

74   observed for the overall *Cardinium* prevalence between the two studies may be attributed to the

75   time of collection. Indeed, mites were collected between September and December in the previous

76   study and in June-July in the current one. Several studies have shown that the sampling period might

77   affect endosymbiont prevalence and/or density in host populations (Toju & Fukatsu, 2011, Dorfmeier

78   *et al.*, 2015, Martinez-Diaz *et al.*, 2016, Sumi *et al.*, 2017). This increase of *Cardinium* prevalence

79   during summer is compatible with the hypothesis of an accumulation of this symbiont throughout

80   the season via horizontal transfers (Zélé *et al.*, 2018).

81   We found that *Wolbachia* prevalence was overall high, but significantly higher on bean and

82   eggplant than on the other plants. Whereas some earlier studies have shown that *Wolbachia*

83   prevalence in herbivores varies according to the host plant (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010, Toju & Fukatsu,

84   2011, Guidolin & Consoli, 2017), including a recent study conducted in the spider mite T*etranychus*

85   *truncatus* (Zhu *et al.*, 2018), others show no difference (Ji *et al.*, 2015). Unfortunately, the scarcity of

86   studies, along with the fact that they were mostly done in other systems, hampers a meaningful

87   comparison among studies. In addition, it is extremely difficult to sample spider-mite populations on

88   all the plants tested within the same locality (see Table S1 in Additional file 1). Consequently, this

89   implies an important sampling effort to obtain only a very reduced number of populations that fit the

90   criteria for such studies. For instance, despite a large sampling effort across 21 localities and 12 host

91   plant species, Zhu *et al.* (2018) could assess the effect of three common host plants (soybean, corn,

92   and tomato) from three different locations only. Still, they did find that the prevalence of *Wolbachia*

93   was significantly affected by the host plant (about 30% higher in tomato than in corn). In our study,

94   the amplitude of the observed effects is much lower, possibly due to a threshold effect since the

95   prevalence of *Wolbachia* that we observed in *T. urticae* is overall much higher than that observed in

96   *T. truncates* by Zhu *et al.* (2018). Clearly, differences in *Wolbachia* prevalence were not associated

97   with plant phylogenetic distance, as it differed between the solanaceous plants used (eggplant and

98   tomato). Moreover, the effect of an endosymbiont on arthropod-plant interactions may depend on

99   both the genotype (or species) of symbiont (Leonardo & Muiru, 2003) and arthropod host (Chen *et*

100   *al.*, 2000, Ferrari *et al.*, 2007, McLean *et al.*, 2011, Wagner *et al.*, 2015), and/or their interaction

101   (Ferrari *et al.*, 2007). More studies on plant-dependent symbiont prevalence may thus shed light on

102   the potential factors underlying the pattern observed and on the ecological meaning of such effects.

103   Here, we hypothesize that the variation in endosymbiont prevalence according to the host

104   plant is, at least partially, due to plant-specific effects of these symbionts on spider-mite

105   performance. Although we did find some variation of *Rickettsia* and *Cardinium* prevalence according

106   to the host plant, their prevalence was very low, so we opted for addressing this issue using

107   *Wolbachia* only. Overall, we found a strong effect of the host plant on spider-mite performance, with

108 the highest values observed on bean. This is not surprising, given that bean was the rearing

109 environment of the population used, and is generally a host plant of high quality for spider mites (e.g.

110 Magalhães *et al.*, 2011). Conversely, the lowest performances were found on Solanaceous plants

111 (eggplant and tomato), being so low on tomato (cf. Material and Methods) that we excluded these

112 data from further analyses. In the other four plants, we found that some traits (proportion escaping,

113 female fecundity, and juvenile survival) were not affected by *Wolbachia* whereas others (egg

114 hatching rate and sex ratio) were affected in a plant-specific manner.

115 The plant-specific effects of *Wolbachia*, although of low amplitude, could be explained by

116 several non-exclusive mechanisms. First, *Wolbachia* may impose a nutritional burden to its hosts,

117 sequestering and using vital host nutrients for its own survival (Chandler *et al.*, 2008, Caragata *et al.*,

118 2014, Ponton *et al.*, 2015), and this may vary with the host plant. Indeed, the nutrient composition of

119 plant material is often poor or unbalanced for herbivores (Schoonhoven *et al.*, 2005, Karban &

120 Baldwin, 2007), and nutrient deficient diet may increase the competition for resources between

121 hosts and symbionts. In turn, this may lead to a decreased ability of infected spider mites to allocate

122 enough nutrients to ensure egg viability on plants of low quality. Increased host-symbiont

123 competition on such low-quality plants could also lead to a biased sex ratio towards males because

124 females are produced from bigger eggs than males in *T. urticae* (Macke *et al.*, 2011). In addition, the

125 slight *Wolbachia*-induced female-biased sex ratio observed on purple could be a consequence of the

126 lower hatching rate observed on this plant, as larger eggs are generally more likely to hatch (Macke

127 *et al.*, 2011). However, if this hypothesis would hold true, one would expect a stronger cost of

128 *Wolbachia* in spider mites on plants of lower quality for mites, and we did not find such pattern.

129 Second, *Wolbachia* may directly influence the metabolism of some plants, which in turn can

130 affect the biology of its herbivorous hosts. For instance, *Wolbachia* infecting the leaf-mining moth

131 *Phyllonorycter blancardella* might be responsible for an increased level of cytokinins (plant hormones

132 mainly involved in nutrient mobilisation and inhibition of senescence) in infested apple trees, *Malus*

133 *domestica*. In this system, *Wolbachia* thus helps its host to develop in photosynthetically active green

134 patches in otherwise senescent leaves (Kaiser *et al.*, 2010, Body *et al.*, 2013). Interestingly, cytokinins

135 have also been shown to be responsible for sex-ratio shift towards females in the sap-feeding insect

136 *Tupiocoris notatus* (although this effect was not mediated by *Wolbachia*; Adam *et al.* 2017). As

137 *Wolbachia* possess a key gene involved in cytokinin biosynthesis in their genomes (Kaiser *et al.*,

138 2010), frequently infect the salivary glands of its hosts (Dobson *et al.*, 1999) and are present in high

139 density in the gnathosoma of spider mites (Zhao *et al.*, 2013), one could speculate that the sex-ratio

140 shift towards females observed in *Wolbachia*-infected mites on purple and eggplant in our study is

141 mediated by increased cytokinin levels induced by *Wolbachia* in these two plants. Further research is

142 thus needed to test this hypothesis. In particular, whether the *Wolbachia* present in spider mites also

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143   possess genes involved in cytokinin biosynthesis in their genomes is still unknown and the full

144   genome of *Wolbachia* isolated from spider-mite hosts has, to our knowledge, not yet been

145   sequenced.

146   Third, *Wolbachia* may interfere with the mites' response toward plant defences. Indeed,

147   endosymbionts found in herbivores, including *Wolbachia*, may directly manipulate the plant

148   defenses to benefit their host (Frago *et al.*, 2012, Hansen & Moran, 2014, Zhu *et al.*, 2014, Sugio *et*

149   *al.*, 2015, Giron *et al.*, 2017, Shikano *et al.*, 2017), or have a detrimental effect on their host by

150   increasing the level of induced plant defences. For instance, down-regulation of several defense

151   genes of maize by the western corn rootworm *Diabrotica virgifera* has been shown to be mediated

152   by *Wolbachia* (Barr *et al.*, 2010, but see Robert *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, in a recent study, Staudacher

153   *et al.* (2017) found that feeding by mites coinfected with *Spiroplasma* and *Wolbachia* increased the

154   accumulation of 12-oxo-phytodienoic acid (a precursor of jasmonic acid) in tomato plants, compared

155   to *Spiroplasma*-infected or non-infected mites. However, the concentration of jasmonic, salicylic and

156   abscisic acids were not affected and no causal link could be established between the changes in plant

157   defenses and mite performance (although only fecundity and longevity have been studied). Whether

158   the presence of *Wolbachia* in *T. urticae* can upregulate the defences of zucchini and purple, and

159   whether this could explain the reduced egg hatchability observed here, thus remains to be tested.

160   Despite the weak plant-specific effects of *Wolbachia* on mite performance, and that they do

161   not affect the total number of viable offspring, they seem to be correlated with *Wolbachia*

162   prevalence on field populations of *T. urticae* collected on different host plants. Indeed, given that

163   *Wolbachia* is costly on egg hatchability on zucchini, we would expect a lower prevalence of this

164   symbiont on this plant. Conversely, as *Wolbachia* increases the proportion of females produced on

165   eggplant, we could expect a higher prevalence on this plant. Indeed, *Wolbachia* being maternally

166   transmitted, it should always benefit from a more female-biased sex ratio. Note that, although

167   *Wolbachia* may induce cytoplasmic incompatibility in *T. urticae* (Gotoh *et al.*, 2007, Xie *et al.*, 2011,

168   Suh *et al.*, 2015), the effects observed in this study on spider-mite sex ratio cannot be attributed to

169   this phenotype as it involves a cross between infected males and uninfected females, which was not

170   performed here. On purple, we could expect the prevalence of *Wolbachia* to be intermediate, as the

171   infection decreases egg hatchability but increases female proportion. Finally, bean being the plant on

172   which spider mites have, overall, the best performance and that *Wolbachia* is not costly on this plant,

173   we could expect its prevalence to be very high. Hence, by affecting the balance costs/benefits of

174   *Wolbachia* on its spider-mite hosts, plants may affect *Wolbachia* prevalence. From the host

175   perspective, however, although increased egg hatchability would probably benefit the spread of

176   spider mites, it is not clear whether a female-biased sex ratio would benefit mites, as this is expected

177   to depend on population structure (Hamilton, 1967, Macke *et al.*, 2011). More studies are thus

178   needed to shed light on the potential role of *Wolbachia* on the host plant range of spider mites, as

179   done in other systems (Hansen & Moran, 2014, Sugio *et al.*, 2015, Giron *et al.*, 2017).

180   In conclusion, our results show plant-dependent effects of *Wolbachia* on spider mites egg

181   hatchability and offspring sex ratio, two crucial traits for both spider-mite population dynamics and

182   *Wolbachia* spread among host populations. Although the amplitude of these effects is relatively low,

183   they may, at least partially, explain the prevalence of this symbiont in spider mite populations

184   collected on these different host plants. Moreover, our study highlights the importance of studying

185   different host plants and life history traits when addressing the effects of endosymbionts on the

186   performance of their herbivorous arthropods. These results also raised important questions, such as:

187   (i) whether the pattern observed in this study varies between host and/or symbiont genotype, (ii)

188   whether host plants affect the maintenance and/or spread of endosymbionts within and among

189   populations, and (iii) whether endosymbionts affect the host range of herbivores.

190

191   **SUPPLEMENTARY DATA**

192   Supplementary data are available at FEMSEC online.

193

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