

A new species of *Loxosceles* of the *laeta* group from Brazil (Araneae: Sicariidae)

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Abstract

A new species of *Loxosceles*, *L. puortoi*, is described from Palmas, State of Tocantins, Brazil. This is the first native species of the *laeta* group known for Brazil. Males can be distinguished from other species of this group by the very long and narrow femur and tibia of the male palp. Females can be distinguished by the presence of four narrow and long spermathecae with similar width and not largely fused in the basal portion, tibia and tarsus of the palp not incrassate and leg II longer than leg IV.

Key words: *Loxosceles*, Araneae, Sicariidae, brown recluse spider, spider taxonomy

Introduction

Spiders of the genus *Loxosceles* Heineken & Lowe, 1835 are known under the common name of brown recluse spiders. They are distributed from temperate southern Africa northward through the tropics into the Mediterranean region and southern Europe, and from temperate and tropical zones of North and South America (Gertsch 1967; Gertsch & Ennik 1983). More recently, two new species were described for China (Wang 1994). Severe bites in humans have been reported (Gertsch 1967; Gertsch & Ennik 1983) and in some regions of Brazil hundreds of *Loxosceles* bites are recorded yearly, constituting a public health problem (Ribeiro *et al.* 1993).

The New World contains the majority of the roughly one hundred described species of *Loxosceles* (Platnick 2002). Gertsch (1958, 1967) and Gertsch & Ennik (1983) reviewed the New World *Loxosceles* fauna and described several new species. In the South American revision of the genus by Gertsch (1967), they were separated into four groups: *gaucho* group, with four species; *spadicea* group, with three species; *amazonica* group, with a single species, and *laeta* group, with 24 species. Of all these, seven species were known for