STATUS OF THE SPECIES NAME
ERYSIPELOTHRIX RHUSIOPATHIAE
WITH REQUEST FOR AN OPINION

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ABSTRACT. The Judicial Commission is asked to issue an Opinion conserving the specific epithet rhysiopathiae in the species name Erysipelothrix rhysiopathiae.

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Rosenbach (1909) proposed the bacterial generic name Erysipelothrix to include three species, E. porci Rosenbach 1909, E. erysipeloides Rosenbach 1909, and E. murisepticus (sic) (Flügge) Rosenbach 1909. The species name Erysipelothrix porci Rosenbach 1909 was antedated by Bacterium rhysiopathiae Migula 1900, and the new combination Erysipelothrix rhysiopathiae (Migula) Buchanan 1918 was proposed. During the next 50 years the name Erysipelothrix rhysiopathiae became firmly established in the literature of bacteriology, particularly in veterinary bacteriology. Validity and correctness of this name was challenged by Langford and Hansen (1953) and Erysipelothrix insidiosa (Trevisan) comb. nov. proposed. The Langford-Hansen name was not generally recognized until the appearance of the 7th edition of Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology in which Langford and Hansen acted as authors of the genus Erysipelothrix, recognizing one species only under the name E. insidiosa (Trevisan) Langford and Hansen 1953.

We have been unable to find in the literature use of the specific epithet insidiosus or insidiosa in any binary combination for any of the organisms belonging to the genus Erysipelothrix later than the usage by Trevisan in 1889, until the 1953 proposal of Langford and Hansen. It did not appear in the literature for a period of at least 63 years.

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Noteworthy, though without direct application to bacteriological nomenclature, the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (Art. 23(b)) reads:

"A name that has been unused as a senior synonym in the primary zoological literature for more than 50 years is to be considered a forgotten name (nomen oblitum)."

There is, from the standpoint of the workers in the field no reasonable doubt but that the etiologic agent of the diseases swine erysipelas, erysipeloid, and mouse septicemia, is a single species. The complexity of the situation is illustrated by the fact that at least 36 species names have been given in the literature to this species. Allocation has been to eleven different genera as follows: Bacillus, Pasteurella, Babesia, Bacterium, Oospora, Streptothrix, Actinomyces, Mycobacterium, Discomyces, Erysipelothrix, and Nocardia. Fourteen different specific epithets have been proposed.

We request that an Opinion be rendered which will conserve the specific epithet rhusiopathiae in the species name Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae (Migula) Buchanan, and that the species name Erysipelothrix insidiosa (Trevisan) Langford and Hansen be rejected because of the use of the specific epithet insidiosa which should be regarded as an epithetum specificum oblitum, a "forgotten" specific epithet.

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