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Letter to the editor

Escribano-Rodríguez et al. present an interesting report of a boy who had allergic symptoms, mainly urticaria, due to maggots when fishing (*AllergyNet* 1997;52:1038).

In 1984, I reported 32 patients who developed rhinitis, asthma, and urticaria due to maggots (1). Usually, the bait was *Calliphora* (bluebottle), but occasionally *Musca domestica* (common housefly) or *Lucilia* (greenfly) was used. Many of the fishermen had been wrongly diagnosed as suffering from bronchitis, especially when fishing all day in cold and rainy weather, but nine of the 31 men (only one woman was allergic) reported gross swelling of the penis, and it was this symptom of contact urticaria that sent the asthmatics to their doctors for treatment. Immunotherapy in one maggot asthmatic completely failed to give any symptomatic relief, and he reluctantly had to give up his hobby of fishing.

It must also be remembered that the lugworm *Arenicola marina* (2), a common bait dug up in the sand, can also cause local urticaria of the hands and asthma.

References

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2. Wells GP. The mode of life of *Arenicola marina* L. J Mar Biol Assoc UK 1945;26:170-207.

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