

(updated September 2018)

SHORT BIOSKETCH: HERWIG LEIRS



Place and date of birth : Turnhout (Belgium), 22 May 1963
Nationality, residence : Belgian, currently living in Nijlen (Belgium)
Family status : Married to Ann VRANCKEN, four children (*1994, 1996, 1998, 2001)
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HL graduated as a PhD from the University of Antwerp (Belgium) in 1992 with a thesis on population ecology of African *Mastomys natalensis* rats and its implications for pest control. Since 1985, he has been involved in biology, (applied) ecology, zoonosis epidemiology and integrated pest management research of rodents. His research has a strong, though not exclusive, focus on Africa (mostly Tanzania, DR Congo, Ethiopia).

Until 1996, he worked as a researcher at the University of Antwerp. In 1996, he was appointed Head of the Mammal Department at the Danish Pest Infestation Laboratory. He was also an external professor at the University of Copenhagen LIFE Faculty. Since 1999, he worked also as a part-time lecturer at the University of Antwerp, and returned there as a professor in 2001, full professor since 2008 (while still maintaining a formal link to DPIL until 2012). He teaches several courses in the fields of Zoology, Population Ecology and Ecology of Infections. He is co-ordinator, participant or advisor for several research projects focusing on ecology, biodiversity, zoonosis epidemiology and pest control of rodents, many of them with international funding. He acted as a WHO rodent-expert at several instances, among others during the Ebola/Marburg virus outbreaks in Central Africa. He has been an expert or reviewer for several international organisations. He is fluent in Dutch, English, Danish, French, and, to a lesser extent, German; he can communicate in Kiswahili and has basic knowledge of Russian.

He has published one monograph, one edited book, one congress proceedings and over 200 papers on (applied) rodent biology and ecology of infections in international scientific journals or refereed books. He is/was Associate or Handling Editor of four scientific journals and acts regularly as a referee for others. He has participated in many international meetings (about 310 lectures or posters), several times as convener of symposia, and he has been chairman of two international conferences on rodent biology and member of the scientific or organising committee for several others. He has supervised a number of Ph.D.-students (25 completed, 10 ongoing).

From October 2009 – September 2015, he was the Dean of the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Antwerp. Since November 2016, he is Chairman of the University of Antwerp Board of Governors. He is also chairman of the Board of the ngo APOPO, and member of the Board of Trustees at the Royal Zoological Society of Antwerp (the Zoo) and of the Board of Governors at the Institute of Tropical Medicine (Antwerp). He also chairs the expert panel Bio3 for the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) and is a member of the Bureau University Development Cooperation of the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR-UOS).

Few selected representative publications:

- LEIRS, H.**, N.C.STENSETH, J.D.NICHOLS, J.E.HINES, R.VERHAGEN & W.N.VERHEYEN. 1997. Seasonality and non-linear density-dependence in the dynamics of african *Mastomys* rats. *Nature*, **389**:176-180. [IF 30.432]
- STENSETH, N.C., **H.LEIRS**, S.MERCELIS & P.MWANJABE. 2001. Comparing strategies of controlling African pest rodents: an empirically based theoretical study. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, **38**(5):1020-1031. [IF 2.902]
- DAVIS, S.A., M.BEGON, L.DE BRUYN, V.S.AGEYEV, N.KLASSOVSKIY, S.B.POLE, H.VILJUGREIN, N.C.STENSETH & **H.LEIRS**. 2004. Predictive thresholds for plague in Kazakhstan. *Science* **304**:736-738. [IF 28.956]
- TERSAGO, K., R.VERHAGEN, O.VAPALAHTI, P.HEYMAN, G.DUCOFFRE & **H.LEIRS**. 2011. Hantavirus outbreaks in Western Europe (Belgium): reservoir host infection dynamics related to human disease patterns. *Epidemiology and Infection*, **139**:381-390. [IF 2.360]
- REIJNIERS, J., S.DAVIS, M. BEGON, H.HEESTERBEEK, V. AGEYEV & **H. LEIRS**. 2012. A curve of thresholds governs plague epizootics in Central Asia. *Ecology Letters*, **15**(6): 554-560. [IF 15.253]
- GRYSEELS S, BAIRD S.J.E., MAKUNDI R, BORREMANS B, BRYJOVÁ A, **LEIRS H**, GOÛY DE BELLOCO J. 2017. When viruses don't go viral: the importance of intraspecific phylogeography in the spatial spread of arenaviruses. *PLOS Pathogens* **13**(1):e1006073. DOI:10.1371/journal.ppat.1006073 [IF 7.003]