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PARASITE EGGS IN MINERALIZED CARNIVORE MAMMAL COPROLITES (UPPER PLEISTOCENE, SOPAS FORMATION), URUGUAY.

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Dessicated coprolites are the most common source to study parasites in ancient times. Mineralized coprolites, however, have been studied scarcely throughout the world, in search for parasite remains. There are only two papers on paleoparasitology dealing with mineralized coprolites. We have recently the opportunity to examine two mineralized coprolites, diagnosed as of carnivora origin, collected from the Piedra Pintada outcrop of the Sopas Formation at the Cuareim River, Artigas County, northern Uruguay. Fossil land mammals allowed to assign the Sopas Formation to the Lujanian Stage (Upper Pleistocene). Radiocarbon dating suggests at least 43.000 ¹⁴C y B.P. for the Piedra Pintada fossil assemblage. It was not possible to assert the diagnosis at the species level, but the eggs found in one of the coprolites are morphologically similar to Cestode or Trematode species. Several Trematode and Cestode species are found in South American carnivores, but the operculated eggs, pointed in one end, measuring 46.62-49.95 x 33.3 (µm) narrowed the diagnosis. Check lists of known hosts and their parasites are now being used for a more accurate diagnosis. The aim of this communication is to call the attention of parasitologists, specially paleoparasitologists for such a precious material as the mineralized coprolites to carry on search for parasite remains.