Culicoides

Why in News?

Recently, researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have identified 23 species of blood-sucking flies in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

- **Culicoides** – They are ***tiny insects*** similar in appearance to flies.
- They are *more closely related to mosquitoes* in their feeding habits.
- They are called Midges and are locally called Bhusi Files in Andaman and Nicobar.
- **Taxonomy**
  - **Scientific name –** Culicoides.
  - **Order** – Diptera, the smallest haematophagous member.

Haematophagous *means especially an insect or tick feeding on blood.*



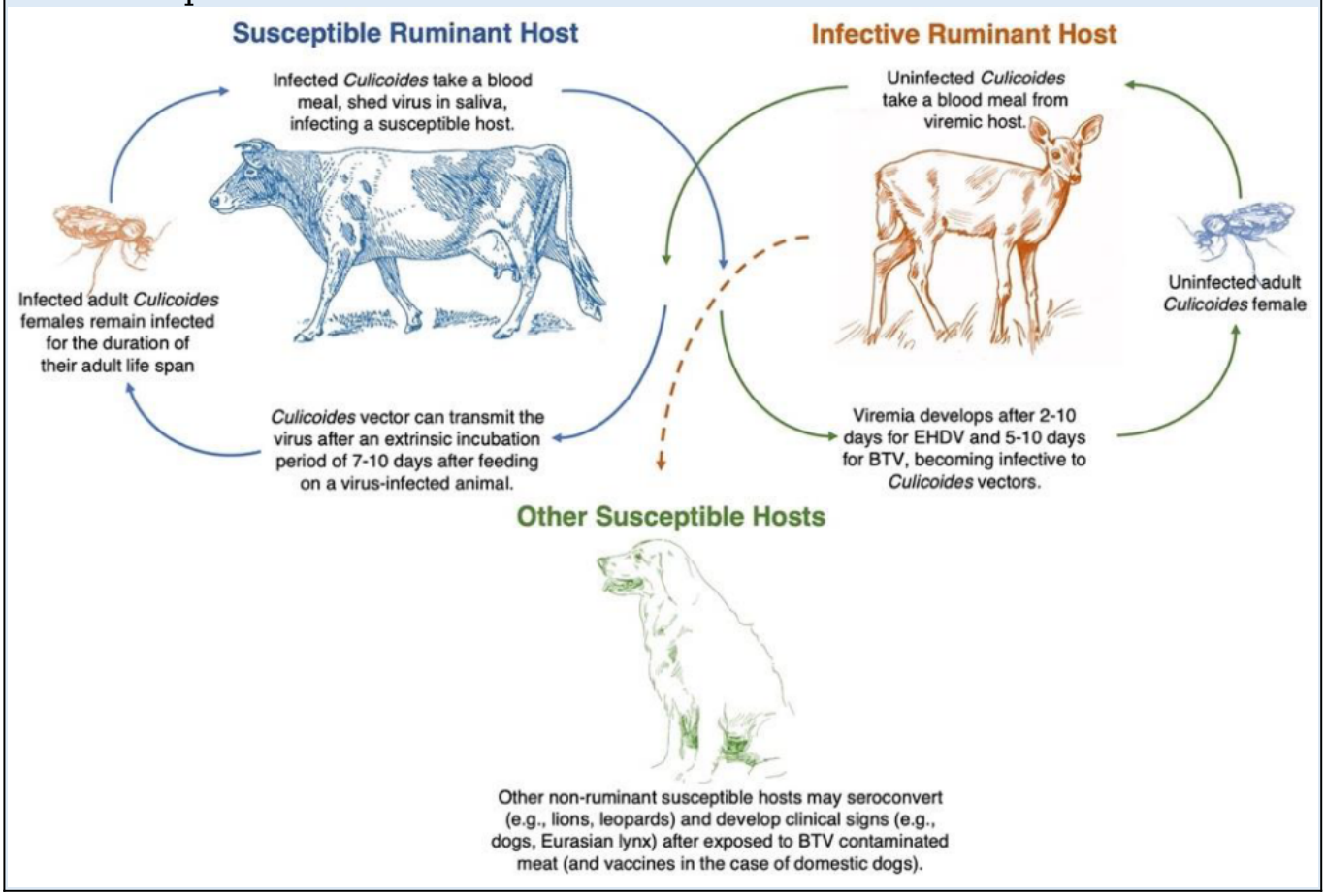
- **Distribution** – Africa, North and South America and Europe.
  - **India** – Includes *93 valid species*, recognized as potential vectors of important pathogens of animal health.
  - 13 new species recorded for the 1st time in India, in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Feeds on** – The blood of *livestock* such as sheep, goats, cattle and wild

animals like deer.

- **Transmitting agents** – 5 of the species are known to transmit the ***Bluetongue (BT) disease.***

A study conducted in 2022 and 2023, revealed that 17 of the 23 species identified are known to bite humans, although no human disease transmission has been reported.

Bluetongue (BT)
• It is an infectious, non-contagious, vector-borne viral disease. • **Symptoms** – Blue discolouration of the tongue, fever, facial swelling and excessive salivation. • **Causes** – It can potentially lead to death in affected animals. • It poses a significant threat to livestock farming and the agricultural economy. • It also impacts humans.



Reference

The Hindu| 23 species recorded in Andaman & Nicobar Islands



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