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MASSIVE TOXOPLASMA ABORTIONS IN A DAIRY SHEEP FLOCK

Giadinis D. Nektarios¹, Terpsidis Konstantinos², Diakou Anastasia², Loukopoulos Panayiotis³, Karatzias Harilaos¹, Papazahariadou Margarita²

¹*Clinic of Farm Animals, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,
Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece*

²*Laboratory of Parasitology and Parasitic Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,
Aristotle University, Greece*

³*Pathology Laboratory, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Aristotle University, Greece.*

Introduction

Toxoplasmosis has not been diagnosed in Greek sheep or goat flocks to date, although many seropositive animals have been found in recent seroprevalence studies.

Materials and Methods

Massive abortions (300/500 pregnant sheep) at 110-130 days of gestation and subsequent reduced milk production were observed in a dairy sheep flock in Greece. Mother and fetal serology, and fetal brain cytology were employed to establish diagnosis. Two treatment regimes were subsequently evaluated in the remaining 200 pregnant sheep. Sulfadimidine was administered at a dose of 20 (Group 1) or 33 (Group 2) mg/kg every 2 days, 4 times, i.m.

Results

Toxoplasmosis was confirmed by mother and fetal serology, and by fetal brain cytology. Treatment was effective in both groups, as the abortion rate was reduced and the gestation period prolonged, resulting in more animals having normal milk production, but was significantly more effective in Group 2.

Conclusions

To our knowledge, ovine toxoplasmosis abortions with such massive abortion rate have not been reported previously. This is also the first report of reduced milk production in a dairy flock attributed to toxoplasmosis abortions.

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Meeting Secretariat



Sava Center, Congress Department
Milentija Popovica 9, 11070 Belgrade, Serbia
Tel.: +381 11 220 6710, Fax: +381 11 220 6081
E-mail: esvp2010@savacentar.net
Web: www.esvp2010.org