CLINICO-EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MASTITIS IN MEAT EWES REARED IN THE NORTH OF PARANA - BRAZIL

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Introduction: Mastitis is infrequent in sheep. However, distinctly from other breeds, Santa Ines ewes, a woolless brazilian meat breed, have a high incidence of this disease and it is severe and difficult to treat.

Aim: To describe clinical and epidemiological aspects of MASTITIS in meat sheep reared in the north of Parana state, Brazil.

Methods: Twenty six farms were visited from October 2009 to May 2010. The surveyed data included morbidity rates, breeds of sheep affected, lamb mortality rates, lactational stage, main clinical signs, attempts of treatment, outcome pattern, method and time of weaning, and another ones. Association between predisposing factors and MASTITIS incidence was tested.

Results: MASTITIS was identified in 18 farms (69.2%). The total number of ewes per flock ranged from 25 to 350, totalizing 2,548 ewes. Mean morbidity rate was 6.5% (ranged from 1 to 21.4%). A strong association was observed between breed and morbidity (p< 0.001) (13.2% in Santa Ines ewes, 5.2% in mixed Santa Ines ewes, and 4.8% in woolled meat breed ewes). The highest incidence was observed in early lactation soon after lambing (66.7%) and the unilateral form was more frequent (66.7%). Diffuse fibrosis, swollen gland, flakes and floccules in the milk, and decrease or no milk production were the main signs reported. Reduced lamb growth rates were reported in almost all flocks (88.9%) and there was a high correlation between suckling lamb deads and affected ewes (r=0.912; p< 0.001). Once detected the disease worsens rapidly and the attempts of treatment were reported in only 10 farms (55.5%) with intramammary antibiotic drugs (20%), systemic antibiotic drugs (30%) or both (50%). Ninety sick ewes were treated but the recovery was uncommon (10%) and many ewes were culled (32.2%). The weaning was done between 60 to 90 days (66.7%) or between 91 to 120 days (22.2% of the farms) after lambing. Intramammary antibiotics were used in just 3 farms (16%) at this time. Mammary gland examination by the farmers was not a common procedure. In all farms the ewes were kept indoor at night and the organic matter buildup in the facilities was a frequent finding.

Conclusion: MASTITIS is a serious problem in some brazilian sheep flocks. Future investigations should be focused on the efficacy of preventive measures like systematic mammary gland examination for an early recognition, use of antibiotics at weaning, delaying of the weaning and improving the hygienic procedures.