

EPIDEMIOLOGIC INQUIRY IN PARATUBERCULOSIS SUSPECTED HERDS

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Paratuberculosis or Johne 's disease, is a ruminant's chronic and incurable illness caused by *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis*. The farmer's direct and indirect economic losses and its possible relationship with human's Crohn disease, justifies significant efforts to further study paratuberculosis.

This study consisted of an epidemiologic inquiry in thirteen small ruminant herds, suspected of paratuberculosis, of the Serra da Estrela region, Portugal. This survey has particularly focused on the herd's size, type of bedding, manure management and sanitation, animal movement, herd handling and clinical history. It also studied the human involvement. Afterwards, a simple analysis of the answers was made.

We noticed that the selected herds were mainly of large extent, and only 3 of them had purchased animals from other farms over the previous 6 months. Beddings were mostly made out of hay or straw by-products, and only not seen in 2 herds. It was also concluded that there was no possibility of grazing land sharing, and that 8 of the 13 farmers practice transhumance; As of the clinical signs observed in the herd, 12 of the inquiries mentioned chronic weight loss, 6 of them, associated with diarrhoea; 7 questioned farmers claimed not to have isolated the symptomatic animals and 6 referred not to have instituted any kind of treatment. As for the human involvement, we observed that there were no reported cases of Crohn's disease, nor any clinical signs related to it, having 11 of the 13 farmers claimed not to have ever heard about this sickness.

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