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COCCIDIOSIS IN LAMBS IN NORTHERN SERBIA (VOJVODINA)

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Abstract: The paper examines the results of the research on the coccidiosis in lambs in Vojvodiina. The present study was conducted in 90 sheep flocks from the all territory of Vojvodina in the period from March 2014 to January 2015. Sheep of both sexes (320 males and 580 females, for a total of 900) were randomly chosen. There were 610 adults (one-year-old and above) and 290 lambs. Colected faeces samples were examined using routine coprological methods. During our examination coccidiosis were found at 32.22% (29/90) flocks. We usally occured mixed infection with 2-3 coccidia species. At sheep most abundant species were E.ovinoidalis found at 87.1%, followed by E faurei (42%), Eimeria ahsata (37%), E. granulosa (31%), E. intricata (19%), and E. pallida (8%). Oocyst were found at adult ant young animals, but clinical sign of disease were present only at young animals. The number of excreted oocysts was higher in lambs than in adult sheep

Key words: coccidiosis, lambs, sheep, Vojvodina

Introduction

Coccidiosis in sheep is parasitic infection caused by protozoa in the genus *Eimeria*. Historically, some *Eimeria* spp were thought to be infectious and transmissible between sheep and goats, but the parasites are now considered host-specific (McDougald,1979). At sheep were established next coccidial species: *Eimeria ahsata*, *E.ammonis*, *E.arkhari*, *E.crandallis*, *E.dalli*, *E.danielle*, *E.faurei*, *E.gilruthi*, *E.gonzalezi*, *E.granulosa*, *E,intricata*, *E.marsica*, *E.ovina*, *E.ovinoidalis*, *E.pallida*, *E.parva* Kotlán, *E.punctata* and *E. rachmatullinae* (Foreyt, 1987, 1990). Coccidia of sheep are present worldwide and it seems difficult to say that there is any particular geographical distribution for one or the other species of coccidia (Levine,1985, Wright and Coop,2007).

All species of coccidia are not disease causing. There are only some species that are responsible for the outbreak of the disease. *E. ovinoidalis* can be very pathogen and other species such as *E. bakuensis* (*E. ovina*) and *E.*

crandallis may exacerbate the symptoms of the former two species. Outbreaks of coccidiosis are usually acute and characterized by moderate morbidity and low mortality (O'Callaghan et al., 1987, Gregory, 1990). Usually it is presented at animals at 4-10 weeks.Lamb and kids infection had moderate morbidity and low mortality rate. Environmental contamination and resulting clinical disease is generally influenced by local weather conditions and the grazing management practices of the flock (de la Fuente et al.,1993, Pavlović et al.2013). The economic impact of coccidiosis in small ruminants is not well documented and there is no published data about estimate for economic losses due to subclinical or clinical disease. The economic cost is considerable, in terms such as low growth performance, decrease in productivity, mortality, morbidity, and the cost of prevention and treatment Pavlović et al.,2009,2010). These losses can be linked to reduced production, in the case of moderate infection without clinical signs or direct consequences of diarrhea on the growth of the animals and on mortality, in the case of clinical coccidiosis (Foreyt, 1990).

Coccidiosis in small ruminants (sheep and goats) in Serbia has been tested in the last fifteen years and in our paper we presented results of the our examination at norther part of Serbia – in Vojvodina.

Material And Methods

Vojvodina is situated in the northern quarter of Serbia, The region is divided into: Bačka in the northwest, Banat in the east and Srem in the southwest. Agriculture is a priority sector in Vojvodina. Traditionally, it has always been a significant part of the local economy and a generator of positive results, due to the abundance of fertile agricultural land which makes up 84% of its territory (Ognjenović, 2008). Vojvodina is rich in grasslands suitable for sheep grazing.

The present study was conducted in 90 sheep flocks from the all territory of Vojvodina in the period from March 2014 to January 2015. Sheep of both sexes (320 males and 580 females, for a total of 900) were randomly chosen. There were 610 adults (one-year-old and above) and 290 lambs. Colected faeces samples were examined using routine coprological methods (Soulsby,1977, Pavlović and Anđelić-Buzadžić,2010). Despite the general relationship between clinical coccidiosis and oocyst excretion, no threshold for treatment has been established, though a fecal oocyst count of >20,000 OPG of a pathogenic species is considered characteristic of coccidiosis in lambs. A necropsy is the most reliable method of diagnosis. The coccidia organisms themselves cannot be seen at necropsy, as they are microscopic from gut swabs and at histopathological examination. In total we examined 39 lambs slaughtered in a slaughterhouse. Determination of occidia we performed by morphological characteristic (Levine 1985, Foreyt, 1987,1990).

Results And Discusion

During our examination coccidiosis were found at 32.22% (29/90) flocks. We usally occured mixed infection with 2-3 coccidia species. At sheep most abundant species were *E.ovinoidalis* found at 87.1%, followed by *E faurei* (42%), *Eimeria ahsata* (37%), *E. granulosa* (31%), *E. intricata* (19%), and *E. pallida* (8%). Oocyst were found at adult ant young animals, but clinical sign of disease were present only at young animals. The number of excreted oocysts was higher in lambs (18325+/-23383 OPG) than in adult sheep (2597.3+/-12373 OPG).

At necropsy, macroscopic changes included mucosal hemorrhages and whitish nodular polyps in the jejunum were found. Histopathological changes were characterized by local hypertrophy and hyperplasia of intestinal villi, villus blunting and inflammatory infiltration in the lamina propria. Numerous developmental stages of the parasites were observed in enterocytes. These findings were identical to the pathological changes in lamb coccidiosis described by Khodakaram-Tafti and Mansourian (2008).

Coccidiosis, like other internal parasite problems, is directly linked to contamination of the lambing area or pastures with coccidia "eggs" (oocysts) passed in the manure of infected ewes and lambs (Pavlović,2009 Altaf and Hidayatu,2014). The symptoms observed are dependent on the species of *Eimeria*, how many are present, the animal's age, production status, overcrowding, stress level and environmental factors. Immunity develops over time, so young animals are more susceptible than older animals (Gregory and Catchpole,1989). Adult animals can have coccidia, but not show symptoms. Lambs 1–6 month old in lambing pens, intensive grazing areas, and feedlots are at greatest risk as a result of shipping, ration change, crowding stress, severe weather, and contamination of the environment with oocysts from ewes or other lambs. When lambs are exposed to infection early in life as a result of infection from the ewe and a contaminated lambing ground, a solid immunity usually develops and problems are seen only when the stocking density is extremely high (Chartier and Paraud,2012).

In winter lambing production systems, coccidiosis outbreaks are common in 3 to 6-week-old lambs that are infected with coccidia oocysts shortly after birth (first few days of life). In our area, outbreaks of clinical disease in winter lambing flocks commonly occur when lambs are about 20 to 30 days old. Coccidiosis is also more common during the second half of winter lambing, when the wet and relatively warmer transitional weather of late February and March contributes to coccidiosis survival and spread in the environment.

Signs of clinical disease (scours) generally occur about 18 to 20 days after ingestion of sufficient amounts of coccidia oocysts from the contaminated

environment. Clinical coccidiosis occurs when damage to the gut is sufficiently severe to cause dysfunction. This normally occurs at the beginning of the parasite's sexual multiplication stage, when parasite numbers reach their peak. (Taylor et al., 2007). Due to the damage of the cells lining the intestines, the primary symptoms of coccidiosis in sheep is sheep diarrhea, which may be foul smelling and contain mucus and blood. Sheep diarrhea may have a dark tarry appearance and, in severe cases, large blood clots can be seen (Gregory,1990). The hindquarters and tail may be covered with manure. Additionally, the performance of sheep will surfer due to loss of appetite, weakness, abdominal pain and fatigue. Some animals may die before showing signs of coccidosis if they are exposed to a large amount of coccidia in the sheep environment. Even though sheep may recover, there could be long-lasting effects due to intestinal damage that cause general unthriftiness, decreased growth, inferior sheep milk production and a greater predisposition to other diseases (Altaf and Hidayatu, 2014)

There are two aspects to preventing clinical coccidiosis. The first is eliminating or lowering the numbers of pathogenic oocysts ingested through good biosecurity, hygiene and management. Prior to lambing and between groups all housing and pen materials should be thoroughly cleaned to remove all organic material and then disinfected with a product effective against coccidia oocysts. At pasture, contamination levels are reduced by regularly moving to clean grazing and avoiding fields that carried young lambs in the previous season when possible. Lambs with ewes at lower stocking densities have a much lower risk of disease (Kusiluka and, Kambarage, 1996).

The second is timed and targeted preventative treatment. Because occurrence of coccidiosis under these management systems often becomes so predictable, coccidiostats should be administered prophylactically for 28 consecutive days beginning a few days after lambs are introduced into the environment. Treatment of affected sheep once coccidiosis has been diagnosed is not effective, but severity can be reduced if treatment is begun early. In groups of lambs at pasture, frequent rotation of pastures for parasite control also helps control coccidial infection (Vujić et al.1991).

Conclusions

Sheep coccidiosis was of great importance to health status of lambs and its performances. Lambs infection had moderate morbidity and low mortality rate. Consequence is significant increase of lamb accrescense, its weakens and less growth. The best preventive measure a lamb producer can take is to use a feed with a coccidiostat added. With careful management and sound preventive measures, the losses associated with this disease can be reduced to minimal levels.

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