INQUÉRITO SOROEPIDEMIOLÓGICO DE *Neospora caninum* EM OVINOS DESTINADOS AO ABATE.

(SEROEPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEY TO Neospora caninum IN SHEEP FOR SLAUGHTER)

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Neospora caninum is an obligate intracellular protozoan parasite, responsible for an emergent disease with considerable economic impact due to reproductive losses and whose zoonotic potential is until unknown.

Different animal species have been reported as susceptible to *N. caninum* infection and serologic evidences of human exposure were also demonstrated in different studies (NAM et al., 1998; TRANAS et al., 1999; LOBATO et al., 2006). The first report of neosporosis in sheep occurred in 1990 (DUBEY et al., 1990), in a lamb with clinical signs of neurologic disease. In Brazil, there are few reports of natural infections by *N. caninum* in sheep. This way, the present study aimed the survey of antibodies and risk factors to *Neospora caninum* in sheep for slaughter.

Serum samples from 596 sheep coming from the states of São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul were evaluated by indirect fluorescence antibody test (IFAT). Of all samples tested, 353/596 (59,23%) were positive, with titles 25 (129; 36,54%), the cut-off adopted, 50 (131; 37,11%), 100 (65; 18,41%), 200 (20; 5,67%) and 400 (8; 2,27%). Among the positive animals, 263/353 (74,50%, CI 95% 69,71-78,77%) were coming from Rio Grande do Sul and the city of Pirajuí, located in São Paulo, presented the highest percentage of seropositive animals (25/30; 83,33%). Animals from farmers using a semi-intensive system of rearing, had lower percentages of seropositivity with 45,00% (27/60) of positive sheep, as compared to the intensive (60,00%; 27/45) and extensive (60,90%; 299/491) systems.

The epidemiological variables associated with the serology showed significative difference in relation to sex (P=0,02; OR=1,46), breed (P=0,02), state (P=0,03; OR=1,43) and county (P=0,00), but in multivariate analysis, through logistic regression, the association was evident only related to the state (P=0,05; OR=1,39). The results showed the presence of infection by *N. caninum* in sheep herds of slaughterhouses.

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