

HELMINTHIC INFECTIONS IN CALVES OF SMALL RURAL PROPERTIES OF NORTHWESTERN SÃO PAULO

(*INFECÇÕES HELMÍNTICAS EM BEZERROS DE PEQUENAS PROPRIEDADES DO NOROESTE PAULISTA*)

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Helminthiasis causes economic losses because it affects the productivity of dairy herds. This study aims at evaluating the occurrence of helminthic infections in calves of different age groups of dairy herds in the northwestern São Paulo. During November 2012, a total of 107 fecal samples were collected from the calves of ten different dairy farms. The stool samples were divided into three groups: G1 (0-3 months), G2 (4-6 months) and G3 (7-9 months). Egg counts per gram of feces (EPG) were performed according to the Gordon & Whitlock method (1939). Significant difference between age groups and EPG was statistically determined by the Kruskal Wallis test. A significant difference was observed between G1 and G2 ($p < 0.05$) and between G2 and G3 ($p < 0.05$). The results showed that the calves were infected by endoparasites between four and six months of age, which can be partially explained by the transfer of passive immunity to the animal via colostrum so the calf has autonomy to respond to infection. Furthermore, at this age, calf roughage intake increases and, in most cases, comes from pastures contaminated with helminth eggs. In the first day of a calf life it is common to administer Ivermectin as a prophylactic measure; however, this study shows that this is unnecessary. Also, the indiscriminate use of Ivermectin by producers has caused anthelmintic resistance. The highest parasitic infection age was from four to six months. This type of laboratory tests must be performed as a routine in order to recommend the best deworming strategy for reducing livestock helminthic infection.

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