An outbreak of listeriosis in cattle in Nigeria

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Introduction

Listeriosis is a disease of ruminants in which the clinical features include encephalitis, septicaemia and abortion (6). The disease is of importance in temperate countries but rare in the tropics and subtropical regions, although it has been reported from Africa (2). The encephalitic and genital forms rarely occur together in the same animal or even in the same flock of sheep (3), and both the visceral and central nervous system may be involved more frequently.

The common feature of listerial encephalitis is circling although there may be unilateral facial paralysis (4). The disease is more acute in calves and sheep than in adult cattle with death occurring within 3-4 days (1). This paper reports an outbreak of listeriosis in which abortion, encephalitis and death were recorded in adult cattle while death and encephalitis were seen in calves.

Discussion and Conclusion

A review of the literature indicates that although listeriosis is a common disease in ruminants, it is more currently encountered in the temperate countries than in the tropics where it occurs sporadically (2). In the case reported here, a total of 35 animals (calves and adults) were lost and four abortions/still births were observed. This constitutes a large economic loss to the owner of the farm apart from the other financial commitments in disease treatment and control.

Both calves and adults showed clinical signs of circling, ataxia and pyrexia as described by YOUSIF et al (7) and BLOOD and RADOSTIS (1). On histopathology however, although micro-abscesses usually associated with Listeria monocytogenes (6) were not observed, a marked purulent meningitis, also associated with listeria infection was seen. Although the clinical picture of the infection could be suggestive of heart water, no clusters of Cowdria ruminantium were seen in brain smears or sections. The association between the lesions and listeria infection was confirmed on the identification of Listeria monocytogenes from the two carcasses examined post-mortem. Again,..

An outbreak of listeriosis in a herd of cattle associated with stillbirth, abortion, nervous signs and death is reported. Typical micro abscesses in the brain were not observed on histopathology but a marked purulent meningitis was seen and *Listeria monocytogenes* was isolated on culture. **Key words**: Cattle - Listeriosis - *Listeria monocytogenes* - Abortion - Meningitis - Nigeria.

**References**


![Photo 1: Calf brain showing purulent meningitis (H & E x 750).](image)

when cotrimozazole to which the organism was sensitive was used to treat the rest of the herd which did not show nervous signs of listeria infection, deaths were no longer recorded on the farm. The source of infection was not known although it is possible that the organism was introduced into the flock by the recently introduced animals.

The authors are not aware of any other reported cases of listeria infection in ruminants in Nigeria. We therefore suggest that cases of nervous signs especially circling should be properly investigated to confirm the aetiological agent.

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