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Poster Flash 4 – 8 Pathology Associated with Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) Virus Infection in Sheep

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Introduction: Previous experimental studies have already shown the possibility that the Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) virus causes reproductive problems in sheep, but the description of natural cases of infection associated with abortions or congenital malformations in sheep is not frequent. The objective of this study is to report the main pathological findings in natural cases of reproductive failure associated with BVD virus infection.

Materials and Methods: Abortion cases occurred in four flocks, in which percentages of aborted ewes varied from 12% to 62%. Additionally, stillborn and weak lambs, showing nervous clinical signs, were detected. Complete necropsies were made in two fetuses and five newborn lambs clinically affected. Samples from different tissues were taken for histopathological analysis. Moreover, sera, vaginal swabs and tissues were processed for serological, bacterial isolation and PCR analysis.

Results: The clinical history of these cases suggested the involvement of an infectious agent against which the flocks were not immunized. Macroscopically, hydrancephaly (different degrees) was the most common finding, together with cerebellar atrophy, microcephaly and polymicrogyria. Arthrogryposis and kyphosis were detected in one flock. By immunohistochemistry, positive immunolabelling for pestivirus antigen was detected in nervous tissues. Sequencing of specific regions from the viral genome allow for the identification of BVD virus.

Conclusions: BVD virus infection in pregnant ewes can cause high rates of fetal/perinatal mortality, with severe congenital anomalies. The possibility of pestivirus cross infection between ruminant species should be considered when addressing reproductive failure in sheep.