Bacterial Causes of Small Ruminant Abortion: A systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Gezahegn Alemayehu, Gemechu Chala, Samson Leta, Gezahegne Mamo and Barbara Wieland

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Introduction

• Abortion in sheep and goat cause significant wastage and financial losses worldwide, affect productivity (lambs/kids)
• Infectious agents are the most common causes
• Common bacterial causes
  • Chlamydia abortus
  • Brucella spp.
  • Coxiella burnetii
  • Campylobacter spp.
  • Listeria spp.
  • Leptospira spp.

Most causes are zoonotic, thus are a public health risk, with high risk of exposure for farmers.
Objective

Improve understanding of relative importance of bacterial abortion causes

• To conduct a comprehensive literature search
• To preform systematic review and meta-analysis of reports which identify bacterial agents from abortion cases in small ruminants
Methodology

Literature search strategy

• Review protocol based on PRISMA guideline
• Search in PubMed and Google Scholar databases
• Keywords: (list of hazards) and (animal species) and (Abortion).
• Titles and abstracts were screened by two independent reviewers.
• Duplicates were identified and removed
Inclusion criteria

- Study conducted on small ruminants
- Samples collected from aborted ewes and doe (not sero-survey in healthy population!)
- Observational studies
- Published in English and after 2000
- The presence of the following data
  a. location (country) of study
  b. type and number of sample examined
  c. pathogen detection technique
  d. type of pathogen identified and
  e. number of positive samples for each pathogen in each animal species
Data extraction

• Using data extraction template:
  ✓ first author
  ✓ year of publication
  ✓ year of study
  ✓ location (country)
  ✓ number positive
  ✓ number negative
  ✓ continent
  ✓ study design
  ✓ bacteria species
  ✓ animal species
  ✓ test method
  ✓ type of sample
  ✓ number of abortion cases
Data analysis

- Descriptive analysis
- Fitting a random effects model
- Meta-regression
- Inter-study heterogeneity – \( \chi^2 \) statistic (Cochrane’s Q-test)-
p-value.
- Degrees of heterogeneity among studies(\( I^2 \)), ranges from 0% to 100%–
  - 0% to 40%: might not be important;
  - 30% to 60%: moderate heterogeneity
  - 50% to 90%: may represent substantial heterogeneity
  - 75% to 100%: considerable heterogeneity.
Results
Flow diagram of the selection of eligible studies

- Records identified from PubMed (n=589)
- Records identified from Google Scholar (n=57)

- Record after duplication removed (n=638)

- Records screened (n=638)
- Records excluded after title and abstract screening (n=565)

- Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n=73)
- Full-text articles excluded (n=28)

- Studies included in meta-analysis (n=45)

→ Resulted in 176 animal level reports, representing 33,066 animals
Publication year of the included studies
Type of samples used

- **Brucella spp.**
  - Fecal sample
  - Fetal fluid

- **C. abortus**
  - Fetal fluid
  - Sera aborting ewe/doe
  - Milk

- **C. burnetti**
  - Fetal fluid
  - Sera aborting ewe/doe
  - Milk
  - Blood
  - Placenta

- **Campylobacter Spp.**
  - Fetal fluid
  - Sera aborting ewe/doe
  - Milk

- **Leptospira spp.**
  - Fetal tissue

- **Listeria spp.**
  - Fetal fluid
Diagnostic tests used
Proportion of SR abortion cases with bacterial causes

- Brucella: 21.47%
- C. abortus: 26.56%
- C. burnetii: 16.83%
- Campylobacter: 21.47%
- Leptospira: 18.64%
- Listeria: 3.77%

Number negative
Number Positive
Pooled Prevalence

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Proportion of *C. abortus* in SR abortion cases

Forest plot on proportion of *C. abortus* in aborted small ruminants

Chi², P = 0.00

Degrees of heterogeneity (I²) = 95.53%
Role of animal species, continent, sample type and diagnostic test:

- No significant difference between sheep and goat
- Differences between continents: range from 14.51% (Asia) to 42.29% (North America), $P=0.54$
- Most positives were detected in placenta samples ($p=0.04$)
- Highest proportion of positives with CFT
Proportion of *C. burnetii* in SR abortion case

**Forest plot of proportion of *C. burnetii* in aborted small ruminants**

\[ \text{Chi}^2, P = 0.00 \]

\[ I^2 = 96.68\% \]
C. burnetii

Role of animal species, continent, sample type and diagnostic test:

➢ Higher proportion was detected from goat (22.22%) than sheep (13.10%), p=0.08

➢ Differences between continents: range from 9.93% (Asia) to 55.91% (North America), p=0.00

➢ Most positives was detected in feta fluid samples (p=0.46).

➢ Highest proportion of positives with ELISA (P=0.24)
Proportion of Brucella spp. in SR abortion case

Q- Chi², P = 0.00
I² = 95.35%
T² = 0.17

Forest plot on proportion of Brucella spp. in aborted small ruminant
Brucella spp.

Role of animal species, continent, sample type and diagnostic test:

➢ Higher proportion was detected from sheep (23.48%), than goat (17.33%) p=0.063
➢ Differences between continents: range from 0.0 (North America) to 39.84 (Africa), p=0.00
➢ Most positives detected in milk samples (p=0.1).
➢ Highest proportion of positives with PCR (P=0.01)
Conclusions

• Similar causes across continents, but with different importance and roles they play

• No or limited data found on socio-economic impact caused by these agents

• Overall few studies, especially for LMICs, even though reproductive performance in these countries is lower

• Surveillance and routine diagnostic data not widely accessible, and thus not included in the review

• Further research needed on the role of major pathogens that cause abortion in small ruminants
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Patron: Professor Peter C. Doherty AC, FAA, FRS
Animal scientist, Nobel Prize Laureate for Physiology or Medicine – 1996

Box 30709, Nairobi 00100 Kenya
Phone +254 20 422 3000
Fax +254 20 422 3001
Email ilri-kenya@cgiar.org

ilri.org
better lives through livestock

ILRI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium

Box 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Phone +251 11 617 2000
Fax +251 11 667 6923
Email ilri-ethiopia@cgiar.org

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