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Brucellosis in Horse – a Contribution to the History of Domestic Animal Diseases

The history of brucellosis infected horses is reviewed by written documents from the beginning of the 20th century till the present time.

In this thesis more than 200 international publications were evaluated, at first placed in the historical background and in the following discussed separately in detail with regard to diagnosis, epizootiology, clinic and therapy.

In the field of diagnostics it is to underline that the development of a standardized brucella dry antigen made the slow reacting serumagglutination with its comparable results possible. This was the background to define a titer threshold.

In the majority of the described cases with brucellosis in horse an infection with brucella abortus was found. The serological results showed only in three cases a brucella suis and in one case a brucella canis infection.

The clinic of a brucellainfected horse is variable. Symptoms are lethargy and bursa hygromatosis, especially of the bursa cucullaris and bursa nuchalis. The brucella agent may stay inactive in the reticuloendothelial system for a period of time. In stressful situations a wash-out in preferred organs is possible. The brucella agent was found in urin, afterbirth and in feces.

In Germany programmes to fight this disease were initiated in close connection with serological and bacteriological control tests. They were carried out till now showing a certain parallelism to the extermination of cattle brucellosis. As a result of this no infection of horse brucellosis has been diagnosed between 1965 and today in Germany.

Special reference is made to the possible risks of reinfection based on reports published by the Office International des Epizooties Paris. The risks we face today are brucellainfected game, international, and intercontinental animal transports.