

DETECTION AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF LATENT EQUINE BABESIOSIS IN FRANCE

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Afin de dépister les animaux porteurs latents de *Babesia caballi* et *Babesia equi*, plus de 35 000 chevaux ont été testés en France, de 1981 à 1996, par la technique de fixation du complément. Deux populations ont été testées: l'une suspectée d'être "porteur latent" de *Babesia*, et une autre non suspecte. Parmi les animaux suspects, 10,2% avaient des anticorps spécifiques de *B.equi* et 7,5% spécifiques de *B.caballi*; tandis que parmi les animaux non suspects, ces données étaient respectivement de 2% et 1,5%. Les taux de babésioses latentes les plus élevés ont été relevés au Sud de la Loire. Les infections à *B.equi* prédominent dans la région méditerranéenne et dans le Sud-Ouest de la France ; tandis que les infections à *B.caballi* sont particulièrement présentes en Franche-Comté, Sud Bourgogne, Auvergne, Ouest Rhône-Alpes et Midi-Pyrénées. Il a été constaté une augmentation du taux des babésioses latentes dépistées à partir de 1987.

INTRODUCTION

Equine babesiosis is an infectious haemoprotzoan disease caused by two protozoal parasites, *Babesia equi* and *Babesia caballi* transmitted by ticks. When infected horses live through the acute stage of the disease, they become carriers. Infected animals may remain carriers of these parasites for long period and act as sources of infections for ticks which act as vector. Carrier animals are only detected by specific antibodies which are present during the latent babesiosis (1).

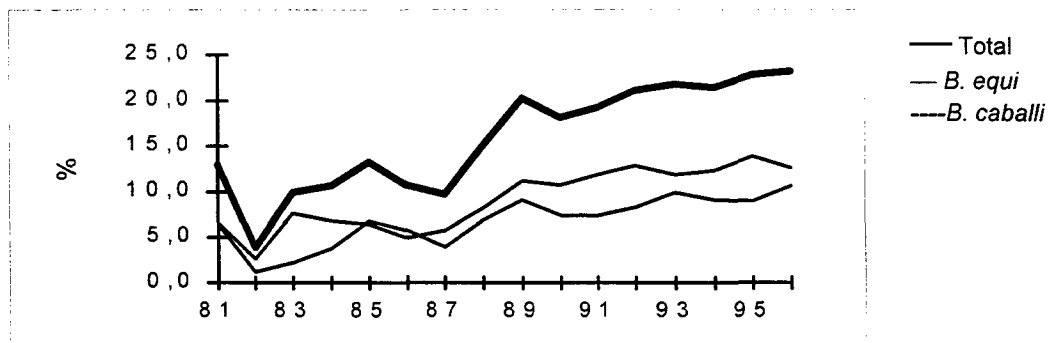
MATERIALS AND METHODS

In France, from 1981 to 1996, more than 35 000 horses were tested by complement fixation test to detect *B.equi* and *B.caballi* carriers animals. Two populations were tested: a population suspected to be infected with *Babesia* and an other population not suspected to be infected.

RESULTS

In the suspected animals, 10.2 % were positive with *B.equi* antigen, and 7.5 % with *B.caballi* antigen; In the non suspected animals, 2 % and 1.5 % were respectively positive with *B.equi* and *B.caballi* antigen. Regarding the annual evolution of this results, the percentage of positive animals increased by 1987. The highest *Babesia* infection rates were in the South of the river Loire. *B.equi* infections were predominant in the mediterranean and South-West region and *B.caballi* infection were especially present in Franche-Comté, South of Bourgogne, Auvergne, West of Rhône-Alpes and Midi-Pyrénées.

Figure 1
Annual evolution of the percentage of *B.equi* and *B.caballi* positive serologic tests /the number of tested sera from 1981 to 1996



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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