

BALANTIDIASIS IN DROMEDARY CAMELS: PREVALENCE, HAEMATOLOGY AND TREATMENT OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in the Qassim region in central Saudi Arabia to determine the prevalence, haematological changes and treatment outcomes associated with *Balantidium coli* (*B. coli*) infection in 500 dromedary camels (45 males and 455 females) of different ages. The results showed a 21.00% prevalence of *Balantidium coli* in the camels. The prevalence of the disease was significantly different ($p < 0.01$) among different age groups and between male and female camels ($p < 0.05$). Depression, decreased appetite accompanied by normal body temperature (36-37°C) in addition to soft faeces coated with mucous were the most common clinical signs in the balantidiasis-infected camels. Haematological examination revealed no significant difference between infected and healthy camels. Treatment of infected camels using oxytetracycline yielded a 91.42% cure rate. The study concluded that *B. coli* is widespread among camels in the Qassim region and thus, treatment of both asymptomatic and clinically diseased camels is important in order to reduce and prevent environmental contamination and human infection. Furthermore, oxytetracycline is indicated in the treatment of balantidiasis in camels.

Key words: Balantidiasis, *Balantidium coli*, dromedary camels, haematology, prevalence