

KNOWLEDGE OF HORSE BREEDERS ABOUT TICKS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF JEQUIÉ, BAHIA

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A major dilemma faced by horse breeders is tick control, as these parasites can cause economic losses and serve as vectors for disease agents such as babesiosis. The objective of this study was to investigate the level of knowledge horse breeders have about ticks. The study was conducted with horse breeders in the municipality of Jequié, Bahia, where horseback riding events frequently take place in both urban and rural areas. A questionnaire was administered to breeders to investigate the occurrence and areas of highest tick incidence in horses, as well as to inquire about their properties, animals, and level of knowledge about ticks. Nine horse breeders were interviewed, raising Mangalarga Marchador, Quarter Horse, and mixed-breed horses, all of which were saddle athletes participating in equestrian competitions and gait contests. Only one breeder kept their animal in a rural, forested area, while the others housed them in stables within the urban area of the municipality's headquarters, a caatinga region. Among the interviewees, 55.55% (5/9) reported no tick infestations, while the remaining breeders associated tick presence with rainy periods, reproductive seasons, and post-competition phases. All breeders were aware of the impact of ticks. Additionally, 66.7% (6/9) recognized the relationship between ticks, anemia, and the transmission of *Babesia*. Regarding tick control in the environment, four breeders did not use specific methods, while the others reported applying parasiticides or using methods such as lime. For tick control in animals, seven used pastes, two used powdered parasiticides, three used injectable parasiticides, and four used baths. Although breeders possess basic knowledge, their management methods are applied instinctively, highlighting the importance of disseminating information on tick prevention, control, and related health risks.

Keywords: *Babesia*, Horses, Prevention.