INFLUENCE OF REPRODUCTIVE STATUS ON THE PARASITE LOAD OF SHEEP RAISED IN THE SEMI-ARID REGION OF BAHIA

LAYSLA SILVA LACERDA[1], LÁIZ ALVES MENEZES DE SOUZA[1], LUANA DOS SANTOS AQUINO[1], SHAIANE RAMOS CAMPOS[1], MAURÍCIO SANTOS CONCEIÇÃO[1], JAIRO TORRES MAGALHAES JUNIOR[1]

[1]UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO OESTE DA BAHIA, BARRA, BAHIA, BRASIL

Abstract:

Gastrointestinal parasites are one of the main health challenges in sheep farming, compromising the productive performance of the flock. However, few studies have investigated the influence of reproductive status on the intensity of infection.

This study compared the parasite load and clinical parameters between two groups of sheep in different reproductive periods. In January 2025, samples were collected from 16 ewes (9 in puerperium and 7 in the early third of pregnancy) of the Santa Ines breed, aged between 1 and 2 years and raised under similar conditions of grazing and sanitary management at the UFOB School Farm. Parasitic (OPG) and physiological (FAMACHA test and hematocrit) data were analyzed. Among the ewes in puerperium, 66.6% had OPG over 700, while only 14.28% of the ewes in early pregnancy had high OPG. As for the hematocrit assessment, 77.7%of the ewes in puerperium had a hematocrit of less than 25%, in contrast to those in early pregnancy,where none had such a reduction. When assessing the degree of FAMACHA, it was found that 55.5% of puerperal ewes had FAMACHA higher than 3, in contrast to only 14.28% of ewes in the early stages of pregnancy.

These findings suggest that lactation directly influences susceptibility to parasitic infection, potentially due to an increase in the production of cortisol, oxytocin and prolactin,which reduce the animal's immune capacity.There is also a reduction in cytokine production and a detour of nutrients to milk production, increasing the risk of anemia and infection.

Therefore, proper knowledge of this impact is fundamental for adopting strategies such as feed supplementation, since,in addition to hormonal effects, nutrition also influences the sheep's immune response.Furthermore,the division of flocks can also help with sanitary control, minimizing negative impacts on production.

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