OCCURRENCE OF ANTIBODIES AGAINST *Toxoplasma gondii* IN FREE-RANGING BOAR (*Sus scrofa*) IN THE MOUNTAIN PLATEAU OF SANTA CATARINA STATE, BRAZIL

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The wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) is an exotic and invasive species in Brazil, being considered a pest in the Santa Catarina Plateau, of the Santa Catarina State, where damage to agriculture has been frequently reported. In addition, the wild boar has also been implicated as a potential source of *Toxoplasma gondii* infection in humans, since the ingestion of its appreciated meat occurs without any health control, since the legislation allows the slaughter of the animals, but prohibits the commercialization of their meat. In order to evaluate *T. gondii* infection and to verify whether there is a correlation between serology and sex, age and origin of the animals, blood samples (n=80) from wild boars legally slaughtered in the Santa Catarina Plateau were collected to obtain sera, which were analyzed by Immunofluorescence Antibody Test (IFAT, IgG, cutoff ≥1:64) for the detection of antibodies against *T. gondii*, using tachyzoites of the RH strain as antigen and anti-swine IgG conjugate. Epidemiological data (sex, age and location) were obtained at the time of collection and tabulated for statistical analysis (Fisher's exact and Chi-square tests; $p<0.05$) to verify whether there is a correlation between these and the serology results. Of the total samples, 40% were positive (32/80) with antibody titers of 64 (14), 256 (10), 1024 (07) and 4096 (01). A positive correlation ($p<0.05$) was observed between serology and gender of the animals, with males presenting 55% positivity and representing 69% of the positive animals. These results indicate the presence of *T. gondii* infection in wild boars in the Santa Catarina Plateau, and suggest that exposure to the parasite was possibly from contaminated food sources. Wild boars are omnivores and can become infected either through the ingestion of oocysts, present in the environment, or cysts (bradyzoites) of the parasite, through carnivorism.

Supported By: FAPESC (2023TR000236) AND CNPq (INCT-TOXO: 406572/2022-4)

Keywords: Toxoplasmosis, Wild animals, Serology, IFAT.