Welcome to issue 6 of **Paws Claws and Udder Things**. Over the past few weeks, I have been contacted by a number of senior veterinarians and practice managers asking if the recently announced price freeze on the bulk of our diagnostic tests was purely a short-term measure or if this level of pricing would be sustained. My answer was very clear - we do not anticipate reissuing our price lists again until 1 April 2011 at the earliest. Given the recent price escalations by some other diagnostic laboratories, I am confident that Gribbles Veterinary now offers the best value and most comprehensive veterinary pathology service in the country.

Kevin Darling  
National Marketing Manager  
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**Bartonella henselae** and Cat Scratch Fever  
Gribbles Veterinary partnering with research

Cat Scratch Fever, or Cat Scratch Disease (CSD), is a syndrome that has been recognised in human medicine since 1889; however, it took a further 100 years for the aetiological agent to be identified as *Bartonella* species. The bacterium uses cats as a major persistent reservoir host, is transmitted to humans by cat bites and scratches, and may be responsible for life threatening inflammatory conditions in immunocompromised cat owners. Fleas are recognised as the vector transmitting the organism from cat to cat.

Nothing was known about the prevalence of the organism in cats in New Zealand until 1997, although the disease was frequently identified in humans. Then, in 1997, the NZVJ published an article by two Auckland practitioners working in conjunction with Greenlane and National Women’s Hospital in Auckland. The authors identified *Bartonella henselae* by blood culture in eight of 48 Auckland cats1.

Interest in *Bartonella* gathered momentum as international study groups began investigating the prevalence and disease syndromes in which it was implicated. The situation in New Zealand, however, remained unclear.

In 2009, Dr Kara Dawson was part way through a Masters in Veterinary Studies, majoring in epidemiology, and looking for support on a practical project to help complete her degree when she approached Gribbles Veterinary for ideas. Collaboration began to assess the prevalence of the infection locally, resulting in a serological test assay being trialled in 70 homeless cats from the Hamilton region. The organism is notoriously difficult to culture and requires experience and molecular confirmation. If there was to be a commercial application to diagnosing *Bartonella* in cats, then serological testing appeared to be the most cost effective, user-friendly way to proceed. Sharing financial and technical resources, and with the support of funds from the Companion Animal Health Foundation and approval of the Animal Ethics Committee, Gribbles Veterinary and Kara gathered blood samples, sourced consumables and undertook testing of the sera.

The results are part of Kara’s degree completion, and will be published in detail in due course; however, Gribbles Veterinary is proud to announce this research has been in keeping with our policy of returning education to New Zealand practitioners and investing in our clients. This will be the largest study of *Bartonella* to date in New Zealand and we hope that the information it provides to practitioners will assist them in giving advice to cat owners about

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1. *Bartonella henselae* and Cat Scratch Fever: Gribbles Veterinary partnering with research

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CSD and the need for flea control. The results will also be relevant to the medical profession.

The results have shown an overall seroprevalence of ten percent in the study cats sampled. Further analysis by risk group has suggested that if a larger sample was taken, risk factors for Bartonella infection, such as sex, neuter status and origin, could be clarified. Interest has been shown in the testing completed at Gribbles Veterinary, with further molecular testing offered by a notable US university research team. Future investigations in New Zealand could look at regional prevalence, risk factors and may involve collaborating with the medical profession on the link between human cases and prevalence in cats. Understanding of the dynamics of this common zoonotic pathogen in New Zealand cats looks set to grow further yet.

Reference

Bronwyn Smits

Enteric listeriosis

Listeria monocytogenes is widespread in the environment. Listeria are often incorporated in silage and baylage as it is made, and in poor quality silage or baylage the organism may multiply to large numbers and pose a threat to animal health. The occurrence of encephalitic listeriosis in sheep fed silage is well known throughout the world. Less well known is the occurrence of enteric listeriosis in sheep fed poor quality silage or baylage.

Enteric listeriosis was described in the early 1990’s by the pathologists at the Invermay laboratory but it has been seen throughout the South Island. The disease typically occurs in the late autumn and winter periods, and clinical signs may develop within a few days of the feeding of the silage or baylage. Affected animals develop severe diarrhoea and die.

If you suspect this disease multiple fixed samples should be taken from throughout the gastrointestinal tract (abomasum, multiple sections of small intestine, caecum, large intestine, mesenteric lymph node, and liver). It is also helpful to try and culture the organism and the ideal sample for this is the mesenteric lymph node.

Rob Fairley

Strange Brew

This case was submitted by John Hepburn of Helensburgh Vets in Dunedin, and is reproduced with his kind permission.

The image (left) is of a cytology slide of faeces from a 10 week-old SPCA kitten that had had diarrhoea for several weeks. It was otherwise healthy with a good appetite. Tests for strongyloes, coccidia and Tritrichomonas fetus were all negative, and there was no response to metronidazole.

The slide shows very large numbers of a gram positive bacilli forming long chains and so the sample was cultured both aerobically and anaerobically on blood agar. A pure growth of non-haemolytic colonies of this bacterium was obtained from both the aerobic and anaerobic cultures. The bacterium was subsequently identified as Dermabacter hominis. This is a rare opportunist pathogen of humans and is commonly found as part of the normal human skin flora. It has not been previously reported in animals.

John Gill
**Campylobacter hyointestinalis** isolated

Gribbles Veterinary recently isolated *Campylobacter hyointestinalis* from bovine faecal samples. A joint investigation with the National Centre for Biosecurity and Infectious Disease (NCBID) and the OIE Reference Laboratory for Campylobacteriosis has shown that this organism can produce false positive results with the *Campylobacter fetus venerealis* (Cfv) real-time PCR (McMillen and others 2006) currently being used by Gribbles. The frequency with which *C. hyointestinalis* is present in bovine genital tract samples submitted for the diagnosis of bovine infertility is unknown. As a precautionary measure Gribbles Veterinary has therefore discontinued Cfv PCR testing until a more specific Cfv PCR assay is developed.

Reference


David Tisdall

**Bulk tank milk submissions the easy way**

Gribbles Veterinary has agreements in place with New Zealand’s leading dairy companies (Fonterra, Westland, Synlait and Tatua), enabling us to request bulk tank milk samples for diagnostic testing on your behalf. This simplifies the bulk tank milk submissions process and is less time consuming for you and your clients. Simply fill in the bulk tank milk submission form and fax it to your local Gribbles Veterinary laboratory who will then liaise directly with the dairy company in question to ensure that a sample is taken and submitted for testing. Having the dairy companies collect the samples themselves ensures the bulk tank milk submission arrives at the laboratory in a suitable testing condition and that the sample is representative of the bulk tank milk it has been collected from.

The bulk tank milk submission form can be used to request BVD Antibody ELISA, BVD PCR, Liver Fluke Antibody ELISA and Ostertagia Antibody ELISA testing on bulk tank milk samples. The submission form itself is available on the Gribbles Veterinary website or by contacting your local laboratory. If you have any questions concerning bulk tank milk collection or testing, or if you would like us to liaise with another dairy company not listed above, please do not hesitate to contact your local Gribbles Veterinary laboratory.

**Contact us**

Contacting Gribbles Veterinary couldn’t be simpler with our easy to remember e-mail addresses:

- auckland.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz
- hamilton.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz
- palmerston.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz
- christchurch.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz
- dunedin.vetlab@gribbles.co.nz

Alternatively, you can contact any one of our five laboratories using our Free Phone number: 0800 474 225.

You are also more than welcome to use our online enquiry service, available through the Gribbles Veterinary website: www.gribblesvets.co.nz

**Breaking news**

- The transportation of routine diagnostic specimens, cultures, chemicals, sharps and other products deemed dangerous goods and which are used in laboratory processes, are governed by the Land Transport Rules for Dangerous Goods. Amendments to the Rules, first enacted in 2005, came into force on 1 April 2010 (number 45001/2). The rules for transporting 'routine diagnostic specimens' remain unchanged, except for the addition of another option for marking of packages containing the specimens. The marking rule currently requires clear and durable wording identifying the contents as 'routine diagnostic specimens’. This is continued, but a new alternative to that form of marking is included in the amendments, namely clear and durable marking with the UN number ‘UN 3373’ inside a diamond shape (min. 50mm sides) and wording ‘(BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B)’.