PATHOMORPHOLOGY AND AEROBIC BACTERIA ASSOCIATED WITH PNEUMONIA IN SMALL RUMINANTS SLAUGHTERED AT THE NSUKKA ABATTOIR

1UGOCHUKWU, Iniobong Chukwuebuka, 1ANEKE, Chioma Inyang, 1EZEASOR, Chukwunonso Kenechukwu, 2MSHEILA, Wayuta Philip, 3IDOKO, S. I., 4KWABUGGE, A. Y., 1SHOYINKA, Shodeinde Vincent Olu, 1CHINEME, Chijioke Nwankwo, 1CHAH, Kennedy Fionkfu and 5UGOCHUKWU, Emmanuel Ikenna

1Department of Veterinary Pathology and Microbiology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.
2Department of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria.
3Department of Veterinary Pathology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria.
4Department of Animal Health Technology, Adamawa College of Agriculture, PMB 2088, Ganye, Adamawa State, Nigeria.
5Department of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: Department of Veterinary Pathology and Microbiology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. Email: iniobongugochukwu@gmail.com Phone: +234 8037322220

ABSTRACT

Pneumonia occurs in all ages of sheep and goats, in all breeds, in every country of the world causing heavy economic losses. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of pneumonia and aerobic bacteria flora associated with it in small ruminants slaughtered at the Nsukka abattoir. Pneumonic lung of small ruminants were examined for gross lesions. Lung samples were collected and processed using standard protocols for histopathological and bacteriological examinations. Lung samples from 342 goats and 40 sheep were examined. A total of 116(30.36 %) lungs had various types of pneumonia. Two major types of pneumonia were observed during histopathological examination; bronchopneumonia 64(55.17 %) and interstitial pneumonia 52(44.82 %). Out of the 116 pneumonic lungs collected over a six months period, 98 were caprine lungs and 18 were ovine lungs. Aerobic bacteria isolated from the pneumonic lungs were Escherichia coli, Klebsiella pneumoniae, Mannheimia haemolytica, Streptococcus pyogenes, Staphylococcus aureus and Pasteurella multocida respectively. There was no significant seasonal, species and breed associations (p>0.05) between pneumonic lesions observed and the associated aerobic bacteria.

Keywords: Small ruminants, Pneumonia, Interstitial pneumonia, Bronchopneumonia, Aerobic bacteria flora

INTRODUCTION

Small ruminants play an important role in the nutrition and income of people around the world. They serve as source of meat, milk, skin and wool (Habashy et al., 2009). Small ruminants contribute significantly to the economy of farmers in the Mediterranean as well as African and Southeast Asian countries (Chakrabouty et al., 2014). The mass production of small ruminant in the country is constrained by disease, inadequate nutrition, poor genetic resources of the local stock, marketing, social factors, structural constraints
and a shortage of high level trained manpower (Yesuf et al., 2012). Mohamed and Abdelsalam (2008) reported that respiratory tract infections were of common occurrence in various species of domestic and farm animals. Pathogenesis is multifactorial, and the diseases appear due to the interaction of infectious micro-organisms (bacteria, mycoplasma, viruses and fungi), host defense, environmental factors and stress. Bacterial infection of the respiratory tract may be primary, occurring in healthy individuals or secondary to a large number of conditions which causes immunosuppression (Yesuf et al., 2012). Secondary bacterial infection occurs especially when the resistance of the respiratory mucosa is lowered and bacteria growing in the upper respiratory tract extend downwards (Yesuf et al., 2012). Pneumonia is a major respiratory disease of domestic animals worldwide, especially in countries where livestock management and husbandry are yet to be developed. The disease incidence is usually very high in these areas and this causes serious financial losses to the livestock industry (Raji et al., 2000).

Pneumonia in goats is one of the most important infections that are frequently diagnosed in veterinary clinics and abattoirs (Elsheikh and Hassan, 2012). Sayed and Zaitoun (2009) pointed out that pneumonia is the most frequently occurring respiratory infections in domestic animals, their aetiologic agents being bacteria, viruses, parasites or concert effect of all of them, often predisposed to by several factors. Pneumonias can be acute, chronic or progressive (Bell, 2008). In summary, in Nigeria, some livestock owners dispose of sick, debilitated and infertile animals in an effort to minimize losses, thereby leading to an increase in the risk of slaughtering and consumption of sick animals (Bala et al., 2011). There has been little work done on this topic with regards to extensive aerobic bacteria isolation and histopathological examination in Nsukka agroecological zone of Nigeria. The objectives of this study were to determine the prevalence of pneumonia in small ruminants slaughtered at the Nsukka abattoir, determine the effects of season, species and breed on the prevalence of pneumonia in the small ruminants and identify the aerobic bacteria associated with the pneumonia cases.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area: This study was conducted in Nsukka, a town in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. As of 2007, Nsukka Cultural Zone had an estimated population of 1,377,001. Nsukka is situated at latitude 6°51’24”N and longitude 7° 23’45”E. The town has one abattoir located in the Ikpa Commodity Market, about 55 m from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus.

Study Design and Sample Collection: A cross sectional survey was conducted over a 6-months period in the year 2014; 3 months in the dry season (December to February) and 3 months in the wet season (April to June). Immediately after slaughter, ovine and caprine lungs were examined and sections from lungs with gross pneumatic lesions were collected in duplicates, placed in sterile sample bottles and appropriately labelled. One portion was used for histopathological study, while the other portion was used for bacteriological study. Ethical approval was not necessary as samples were collected from dead animals.

Gross and Histopathological Examination: The lungs of each slaughtered small ruminant were examined and the nature and distribution of the pneumatic lesions of the small ruminants slaughtered at the Nsukka abattoir were documented as described by Thompson (1981). Each pneumatic lung specimen was fixed in 10 % buffered formalin. After fixation, the tissue was dehydrated in graded alcohol (70 – 100 %), clearing in xylene, paraffin wax embedded, sectioned (15 µm) using microtome, mounted on slides and differentially stained with Haematoxylin and Eosin (Drury and Wallington, 1980). Slides were examined with Olympus light microscope at x1000 magnification. Photomicrographs of representative pneumatic lesions were taken using Motic camera.

Isolation and Identification of Aerobic Bacteria: Pneumonic samples were aseptically
collected and streaked on blood and MacConkey agar plates. Inoculated plates were incubated at 37°C for 24 hours. The representative morphological colony types were picked and purified on blood, nutrient and MacConkey agar. Gram positive Coccি were subjected to Mannitol salt agar, catalase, CAMP and coagulase tests following standard protocols (Chessbrough, 2000). Gram negative rods and Coccобацилли were cultured on Eosin methylene blue agar. Giemsa staining, indole, methyl red, Voges-proskauer, citrate utilization, nitrate reduction and urease tests as well as reaction on triple sugar iron agar were accompanied using standard procedures (Chessbrough, 2000). The identity of the aerobic bacteria isolates were determined based on their colonial, microscopic and biochemical characteristics using standard procedures (Chessbrough, 2000).

**Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages of occurrence of pneumonia in small ruminants and aerobic bacterial isolates were used. Chi-square statistics was used to determine the level of association between the season, species, breed, sex and the occurrence of pneumonia. Significance was accepted at p<0.05.

**RESULTS**

Three hundred and eighty-two (382) lungs were examined, 116 ovine and caprine lungs were positive for different types of pneumonia namely bronchopneumonia and interstitial pneumonia. Bronchopneumonia (41.29 %) was more prevalent than interstitial pneumonia (33.54 %) (Figure 1). The distribution of pneumonia among breeds of small ruminants slaughtered at Nsukka abattoir indicated that the Kano brown breed of goat recorded the highest occurrence of pneumonia (Table 1).

The frequency distribution of the histopathological findings and associated aerobic bacteria isolates in goats and sheep slaughtered at the Nsukka abattoir indicated that the Kano brown breed of goat recorded the highest occurrence of pneumonia (Table 1).

The gross lesions observed were majorly, suppurative pneumonia, exudative pneumonia, congestion (Figure 3). Enlarged dark red wet lung (arrow) in a Kano brown goat. Note the inset - blood expressed from alveoli of the cut surface of the lungs in Figure 3 and the consolidation in Figure 4 and hyperaemia in Figure 5.

The aerobic bacteria associated with bronchopneumonia in the ruminants during the dry season were Mannheimia haemolytica, Escherichia coli, Pasteurella multocida, Klebsiella pneumoniae and Staphylococcus aureus, while the aerobic bacteria associated with bronchopneumonia in the ruminants during the wet season were E. coli, M. haemolytica, Streptococcus pyogenes and K. pneumoniae. Furthermore, the aerobic bacteria associated with interstitial pneumonia in the ruminants during the dry season were S. aureus, S. pyogenes, E. coli and K. pneumoniae, while the aerobic bacteria associated with interstitial pneumonia in the ruminants during the wet season were S. aureus, S. pyogenes, K. pneumoniae and E. coli (Table 2).

The percentage of aerobic bacteria isolated from the caprine and ovine lungs observed with pneumonia were 37(32.47 %), 16(13.39 %), 12(9.97 %), 19(16.23 %), 23(19.94 %), 4(3.13 %), 4(3.41 %) and 2(1.42 %) positive for E. coli, K. pneumoniae, M. haemolytica, S. pyogenes, S. aureus and P. multocida respectively (Figure 2).

The gross lesions observed were majorly, suppurative pneumonia, exudative pneumonia, congestion (Figure 3). Enlarged dark red wet lung (arrow) in a Kano brown goat. Note the inset - blood expressed from alveoli of the cut surface of the lungs in Figure 3 and the consolidation in Figure 4 and hyperaemia in Figure 5.
Table 1: Breed distribution of small ruminants with pneumonia slaughtered at Nsukka abattoir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Goats</th>
<th>Sheep</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kano Brown</td>
<td>WAD Goat</td>
<td>Yankasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry season</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet season</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the histopathological findings and associated aerobic bacteria isolates in small ruminants slaughtered at the Nsukka abattoir, during the dry and wet seasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Histopathological Findings</th>
<th>Number of Goats</th>
<th>Number of Sheep</th>
<th>Most frequent aerobic bacteria isolates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dry season</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronchopneumonia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mannheimia haemolytica, E. coli, Pasteurella multocida, Klebsiella pneumoniae and Staphylococcus aureus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstitial pneumonia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Staphylococcus aureus, Streptococcus pyogenes, E. coli and Klebsiella pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet season</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronchopneumonia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>E. coli, Mannheimia haemolytica, Streptococcus pyogenes and Klebsiella pneumoniae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstitial pneumonia</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Staphylococcus aureus, Streptococcus pyogenes, Klebsiella pneumoniae and E. coli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Percentage of aerobic bacteria isolated from the caprine and ovine pneumonic lungs of small ruminants slaughtered at the Nsukka abattoir

Histopathological examination revealed the two types of bronchopneumonia, fibrinous pneumonia in 17 out of 155 (10.96 %) ruminants and catarrhal bronchopneumonia in 47 out of 155 (30.32 %) ruminants, and interstitial pneumonia occurred in 52 out of 155 (33.54 %) ruminant lungs examined. The lungs diagnosed with bronchopneumonia were characterised by neutrophilic exudates were present in the alveolar spaces and lumens of the bronchioles and bronchi, and in some occasions a mixture of various amounts of cell debris, neutrophils and macrophages were observed in these areas and there are also distended.
Pathomorphology and aerobic bacteria associated with pneumonia in small ruminants

Figure 3: Enlarged dark red wet lung (arrow) in a Kano brown goat. Inset showing blood expressed from alveoli of the cut surface of the lungs.

Figure 4: Consolidation (arrowed) of the caudal lung lobe in a West African dwarf goat.

Figure 5: Hyperemia (arrowed) of the caudal lung lobe of a Yankasa sheep.

Figure 6: Bronchopneumonia case characterised by neutrophilic exudates were present in the alveolar spaces and lumens of the bronchioles and bronchi (thick arrow), there are also distended interlobular space (thin arrow), infiltrated with inflammatory cells, distended alveoli (E) and collapsed alveoli (A).

Figure 7: Interstitial pneumonia case characterised by interalveolar space infiltrated with predominantly polymorphonuclear cells. Inset showing lymphocytes, macrophages and a few neutrophils.

DISCUSSION

The major types of pneumonia namely bronchopneumonia and interstitial pneumonia were observed during the histopathological examination. The types of pneumonia observed were the most common types of pneumonia encountered in most studies. Tijjani et al. (2012) reported bacterial flora and pathologic lesions of caprine pneumonic lungs in Maiduguri, Nigeria, Yesuf et al. (2012) had equally reported histopathological changes and bacterial flora associated with pneumonic lungs of small ruminants slaughtered at Gondar, Ethiopia, and Ashraf et al. (1986) had reported incidence and pathology of pneumonias in sheep and goats slaughtered at Faisalabad, Pakistan. Sheep and goats slaughtered in this study were positive for E. coli, K. pneumoniae, M. haemolytica, S. pyogenes, S. aureus and P. multocida. The aerobic bacteria isolated from the pneumonic lungs agreed with the ones isolated by Raji et al. (2000) from ovine and caprine in Zaria, Nigeria and Asaduzzaman et al. (2013) from black Bengal goats in Bangladesh.
The observed variation in the prevalence of different types of pneumonia among different species of small ruminant in this study agreed with Obasi et al. (2001). This may be attributed to the fact that the ratio of the alveolar surface to metabolic weight is very low in sheep when compared to other ruminant species (Aden et al., 2012).

Above 55% of the pneumonic lung samples were positive for *E. coli*, this was higher than reports by previous researchers (Sayed and Zaitoun, 2009; Enany et al., 2012) but lower than the report of Tijjani et al. (2012). *E. coli* was the most prevalent aerobic bacteria, this agreed with the findings of Ouchriah et al. (2015) who also isolated more *E. coli* than any other aerobic bacteria from newborn calves slaughtered in Batna, Algeria but disagreed with the findings of Enany et al. (2012) for buffalo calves slaughtered in Ismailia Governorate, Egypt.

Furthermore, 27.58% of the pneumonic lung samples were positive for *K. pneumoniae*, this was higher than the results reported by previous researchers Enany et al. (2012), Sayed and Zaitoun (2009), but lower than the results reported by Tijjani et al. (2012).

Thirty-five of the pneumonic lungs sampled were positive for *M. haemolytica* was higher than the results reported by Enany et al. (2012) but lower than the results reported by Tijjani et al. (2012). 24.13% of the pneumonic lungs sampled were positive for *S. pyogenes*, this was higher than the results reported by Sayed and Zaitoun (2009), Enany et al. (2012) and Tijjani et al. (2012) but lower than the results reported by Enany et al. (2012).

Twenty-three representing 19.82% of the pneumonic lung samples were positive for *S. aureus*, this was higher than the results reported by previous researchers Enany et al. (2012), Tijjani et al. (2012) but lower than the results reported by Sayed and Zaitoun (2009).

Five representing 4.31% of the pneumonic lung samples were positive for *P. multocida*; this was higher than the results reported by Ugochukwu (2008) but lower than the results reported by Sayed and Zaitoun (2009) and Enany et al. (2012). In agreement with previous reports of Yimer and Asseged (2007) and Azizi et al. (2013) in Ethiopia and Iran respectively, in terms of infection intensity and pathogenicity, it seems that *M. haemolytica* assumes greater prominence than *Pasturella* in Nsukka environment. Although Ugochukwu (2008) reported relatively low prevalence of *P. multocida* (1.15%) in Nsukka as against 4.31% in this study, the possible role of *P. multocida* in the aetiology and pathogenesis of caprine and ovine pneumonia should not be underestimated.

No bacteria could be isolated from 8(5.80%) sampled lungs supported the findings of Yimer and Asseged (2007) in Dessie, Ethiopia, Elsheikh and Hassan (2012) in Sudan and Azizi et al. (2013) in South western Iran.

The variation in the prevalence of different types of pneumonia in small ruminants in different seasons may be attributed to the variation in nutritional status, breed and the effect of stressors involved during transportation, overcrowding and seasonal variation in climatic factors such as temperature and humidity (Obasi et al., 2012). For the caprine species, more of the Kano brown than the WAD and Sahel goats examined had pneumonia, this was also similar to what was observed in the sheep, where more of the Yankasa breed had pneumonia. This difference was mainly due to the fact that the butchers slaughtered more of these breeds and could also occur due to genetic variation of the breed which influences their immune response and host receptor interaction with colonizing bacteria of the selected species (Yesuf et al., 2012). The results confirmed the findings by Raji et al. (2000) that rainstorms, heavy rainfall and dry harmattan are important stress factors in the pathogenesis of pneumonia in sheep and goats.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, based on the results obtained in this study, the prevalence of the diagnosed pneumonia were higher in the wet season than in the dry season, higher in sheep than the goats examined and higher in females than in males examined. It was also concluded that several bacterial species inhabit the respiratory passageways of apparently normal goats and sheep but stressful conditions...
like transport stress, overcrowding, poor ventilation in the houses where these animals are housed prior to slaughtering and poor nutrition could turn these supposedly harmless commensals into pathogenic bacteria. In cases of bronchopneumonia, E. coli, M. haemolytica and Pasteurella species were the most frequently isolated aerobic bacterial organisms for fibrinous types of bronchopneumonia; Staphylococcus spp., Streptococcus spp. and E. coli were the most frequently isolated from catarrhal bronchopneumonia and in this study, bacteriological examination results showed that for interstitial pneumonia cases, S. aureus, S. pyogenes and E. coli were the major aerobic bacteria isolated. The unhygienic condition of the slaughter slab at the Nsukka abattoir was a great concern. A concert effort should be made by Veterinarians, Meat inspectors and Public health specialists to ensure cleanliness of the abattoir and provision of a source of clean and potable pipe-borne water at the Nsukka abattoir. Occurrence of supposedly harmless bacteria flora as pathogenic bacteria has been attributed to transport stress, therefore proper resting of small ruminants prior to slaughter at the lairage and minimal stress during transportation is with great emphasis, recommended to minimize the incidence of caprine and ovine pneumonia. It is also recommended that a detailed research work be carried out to look into the economic and public health implications of these aerobic commensal organisms.

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