

Title:

Prevalence of *Mycoplasma haemolamae* infection in South American camelids in the southeastern United States

Investigators:

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Study description:

Mycoplasma haemolamae is a red blood cell parasite that can induce hemolysis and anemia in South American camelids. Infection of llamas and alpacas with *Mycoplasma haemolamae* may induce anemia, but the prevalence of this organism in different regions of the United States remains unknown. Because some infected animals are not anemic, the benefits of therapeutic interventions are questionable. The purpose of this study is to determine the prevalence of this parasite within the camelid population in the Southeastern United States, and to evaluate if infection is related to clinical signs.

Blood will be collected from apparently healthy animals at their farm location, and from sick animals hospitalized in the Large Animal Veterinary Teaching Hospital of the University of Georgia. Species, breed, gender, age, body condition score, geographical area of residence, and travel out of the Southeast United States will be recorded for each camelid. A 3 ml blood sample will be collected once and analyzed for evidence of *Mycoplasma haemolamae* and for evidence of parasites. A fresh fecal sample will also be collected from each animal and tested for internal parasites.

Duration of study:

The study is ongoing and will continue until 372 llamas and alpacas of any age are enrolled. The study is expected to be completed in 2 years.

Potential benefits to veterinary medicine:

Determining the prevalence of *Mycoplasma haemolamae* infection in the Southeastern United States will allow veterinarians to evaluate the need, if any, for restriction of movement of animals, and to estimate the true impact of this disease on the camelid industry. Furthermore, by determining the association, if any, between positive PCR test results and anemia, results of this study will help veterinarians more accurately interpret positive test results, and, thereby, provide treatment recommendations. Finally, this study will contribute to our knowledge regarding *Mycoplasma haemolamae* epidemiology and transmission. Simply by providing reliable information about the prevalence of *Mycoplasma haemolamae* infection in our part of the country, we will be able to raise breeders' and practitioners' awareness about the disease, and emphasize the importance of owner education and ectoparasite control.