

ACCIDENTAL CHOKE IN WHITE-TAILED DEER

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New Zealand Vet. J. 4: 56). According to Chandler (1956, Vet. Rec. 68: 819), the complement-fixation test was at least 80 percent effective in detecting positive cases in clinically suspicious sheep. The Johnin skin test has little value in the diagnosis of Johne's disease in sheep.

The postmortem findings in sheep and wild animals dying of Johne's disease is variable, but thickening of the bowel, characteristic for cattle, seldom occurs.

Our observations were similar to those of Bourgeois (1944, Schweitz. Arch. Tierheilk 86: 115) who described Johne's disease in a female Japanese deer (*Pseudaxis sika*) in a Swiss zoo.

M. paratuberculosis infection is generally the result of exposure to sub-clinically or clinically infected animals. Spread occurs by infective feces contaminating pastures and drinking water. It has also been shown that lambs and calves may be infected *in utero*. This

could have occurred in the case described here. After infection, which usually occurs in young animals, the incubation period is very long, so that signs of disease do not appear for many months or even years. Whether infected animals develop clinical signs depends upon the presence of one or more contributing factors such as poor nutrition, parasitic infestations, mineral deficiencies and possibly other factors.

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Esophageal obstruction by apples, potatoes, beets or turnips, commonly occurs in domestic ruminants. Two cases of esophageal obstruction (choke) have been observed in free-ranging deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*):

Case #1: On the morning of September 14, 1960, a 190 lb. mature, 8 point buck deer was found dead in the vicinity of an abandoned apple orchard. The carcass was still warm. Although the mouth was wide open and tongue protruded, the cause of death was not apparent until at necropsy, an apple was found firmly lodged in the upper end of the esophagus. On the basis of tooth wear, the age of the deer was estimated approximately 12 years. Both central incisors were missing and the lateral incisors were worn to the gum line.

Case #2: A yearling male deer, found

near an abandoned orchard on August 13, 1966, was estimated to have been dead at least a month. Although post-mortem change was far advanced, the cause of death was evident. A small green apple was found in the esophagus. This deer had 3 inch-long spike antlers, in the stage of "velvet".

COMMENT

Lost and worn teeth may have predisposed to esophageal obstruction in case #1; youth and inexperience may have been a factor in Case #2. Whether or not there were predisposing causes, it is apparent that esophageal obstruction should be considered among the probable causes of death when deer are found dead in the vicinity of apple orchards.

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