



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Author: DURFEE, PHILIP T.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

In your October 1971 issue you published a paper entitled "Toxoplasmosis in Captive Saiga Antelope" by W. S. Bulmer. While I in no way wish to criticize the author's findings or diagnosis I do feel that several inferences made in the discussion should be clarified. The author states that: "It is possible that she (the female Saiga) encountered the infection first and then infected her pen mates by excreting infective organisms in her feces. This latter means of transmission between carnivores has been suggested".⁶ The reference cited states: "Toxoplasmosis has been transmitted experimentally by feeding infected carcasses and the frequency with which intestinal lesions are found in carnivores suggests that this is a natural route in this group". I would interpret this to mean that carnivores become *infected* by this route. There is nothing in the reference nor little other evidence (excepting cats) to suggest that carnivores disseminate the organism in this manner. It would appear that the author has misinterpreted his reference.

On other point on this same subject. If the cysts of *Toxoplasma* were excreted with the feces they would remain infectious only as long as the feces remained wet as the cysts are rapidly destroyed upon drying. It would seem to me improbable that well fed antelope in a zoological garden would be tempted to ingest fresh, wet, feces. The author's suggestion that the antelope became infected through ingestion of feed contaminated with infective cat feces seems much more probable.

I do not wish to seem petty in my criticisms but toxoplasmosis as a zoonotic disease has received much publicity of late and I feel that the author's inferences about the possible infectivity of antelope feces needs clarification.

Sincerely,

Philip T. Durfee, DVM
Box 14
U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No. 2
APO San Francisco 96263, U.S.A.

6. JUBB, K. V. F., and PETER KENNEDY. 1963. *Pathology of Domestic Animals*. Edition 1. Vol. 2 pp. 590-594. New York: Academic Press.

Dr. Bulmer's Comment

I would like to thank Dr. Durfee for his critical examination of my paper. I offer my apologies to Dr. Durfee and other readers for the error in publication. The excerpt from my paper which Dr. Durfee quotes should read: "It is possible that she encountered the infection first and then infected her pen mates by excreting infective organisms in her feces." This latter means of transmission between carnivorous animals has been suggested.⁶ My reference (Ref. #8) for this "inference" is based on the statement: "The ulcers of the digestive tract are usually deep and occur in the duodenum or the rectum; organisms are found in the adjacent mucosa or lying underneath the muscle layers. Where intestinal ulceration is a feature of the infection,