

Angiostrongylus vasorum enquiries submitted to ESCCAP UK & Ireland in 2017

Ian Wright¹

¹Mount Veterinary Practice and Head of ESCCAP UK & Ireland
Harris Street, Fleetwood, FY7 6QX Email: hammondia@hotmail.com

Introduction

The European Scientific Counsel of Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP) UK & Ireland receives enquiries via email as part of its ‘parasite advice’ service to veterinary professionals and the public. *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is the subject of many of these enquiries as the parasite has spread north through the UK over the past two decades and public awareness has been raised through media campaigns. Numbers and types of query regarding a specific parasite are often driven by a lack of familiarity with diagnosis and treatment, or by raised awareness and owner recognition. Here, the types and proportion of *Angiostrongylus vasorum* enquiries are summarised and the possible causes discussed.

Methods

The numbers and type of enquiry are recorded by ESCCAP UK & Ireland each year. *Angiostrongylus vasorum* enquiries were divided into parasite distribution (risk of infection), diagnosis, treatment options and prevention. The enquiries were also calculated as a percentage of the total enquiries submitted throughout the whole year.

Results

In 2017, 7.1% of 183 enquiries were regarding *Angiostrongylus vasorum*. This was the third highest number of any parasite behind *Leishmania infantum* (10.4%) and fleas (8.4%). The highest numbers of enquiries were in the summer and autumn, with fewest taking place in the winter. In total, 46.% of the enquiries were regarding prevention of *Angiostrongylus vasorum* infection/clinical angiostrongylosis, 30.8% were regarding diagnosis and 23.1% were regarding distribution in the UK in subsequent risk of infection.



Coiled L1 *Angiostrongylus vasorum* larvae
(image courtesy of Pedro Serra and NWL)



Baermann apparatus

Discussion/Conclusions

The relatively large numbers of enquiries regarding *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is likely a reflection of both its increased distribution and media campaigns to raise awareness.

Leishmania infantum has seen a steep rise in enquiries regarding diagnosis and clinical management despite it not being endemic in the UK. This is because of large numbers of cases being seen in imported dogs and vets in the UK not being familiar with its treatment. Similarly, although *Angiostrongylus vasorum* is endemic, it has spread to new areas where vets will be less familiar with its diagnosis and preventative strategies.

The increase in enquiries of the summer and autumn may reflect increased prevalence of infection and disease incidence as slug and snail numbers peak but also follows the annual spring media campaign “be lungworm aware”. It is possible that either or both factors are driving interest in the parasite. Increased interest and awareness from veterinary professionals and the public is to be encouraged as its spread across the UK represents a genuine health risk to dogs, especially where vets and owners may not be prepared to encounter *Angiostrongylus vasorum*.

Campaigns such as “be lungworm aware” and parasite awareness/advice groups such as ESCCAP UK & Ireland are vital to both raise awareness and to provide Veterinary professionals with the information they need to protect dogs from the health risks associated with infection.

