Bluetongue virus serotype 16 in a three-month-old lamb

Bluetongue is an endemic disease in Israel; it was first diagnosed in this country in 1950. The peak season for bluetongue and incidence of Culicoides midges is in autumn (September–November). High prevalence of BTV serotype 16 in sheep has been reported from Pakistan and Australia and recently also from Israel.

This report concerns unusual bluetongue morbidity in a single animal, a 3-month-old cross-bred lamb from an unvaccinated sheep flock comprising 120 ewes, that occurred at the end of October 1996. The clinical manifestations in the affected lamb were a rise in body temperature to a peak of 41.6 °C, hyperaemia of the buccal and nasal mucosae, increased salivation and lachrymation. The hooves were warm and painful; the animal was reluctant to move them, and was recumbent.

A blood sample was submitted to the laboratory for virus isolation. The suspected blood was inoculated into 12 embryonating chicken eggs via the intravenous route. Six embryos died within 2–7 days following inoculation. The group-specific RT-PCR method for detection of bluetongue virus (BTV) was applied to RNA extracted from supernatant of homogenate of embryos. The RT-PCR results demonstrated the presence of BTV nucleic acid in the embryo homogenate. The BTV was isolated on a hamster lung cell line and a cytopathic effect was observed after 3 days. BTV serotype 16 was identified by means of the virus neutralisation test. The lamb was treated with phenylbutazone once daily for 3 consecutive days and recovery was noted a week later.

REFERENCES
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