

was weaned at the time of death of the mother. Four weeks before the animal died, it showed signs of colic with recumbency and tympanic abdomen. The animal was degassed via nasogastric intubation and recovered quickly, but the cause of the clinical signs remained undetected.

Immediately before the fatal bluetongue virus infection, mother and cria were in excellent body condition, and both showed no signs of an underlying disease.

Acute clinical signs started with 'hiccup-like' breathing and a stertorous sound discernible via auscultation. One hour later the animal was inappetent, recumbent and lethargic. Seven hours later the animal was observed coughing and mildly disorientated. Fourteen hours after the first observation of signs the animal died.

On postmortem examination, the animal showed severe, acute, diffuse, interstitial and alveolar oedema of the lungs. In the oral cavity, single small erosions and ulcerations on the tongue, palate and buccal mucosa could be observed.

As well as postmortem changes and acute congestion of the liver, spleen and kidneys, histopathology revealed severe congestion, interstitial and alveolar oedema of the lung, and mild hypertrophy of type II pneumocytes.

Focal haemorrhages in the tunica media at the base of the pulmonary artery, a common finding in bluetongue virus infections in sheep, were not observed.

PCR revealed sequences of bluetongue virus in tissue samples (blood, lymph nodes and spleen), whereas no sequences of ovine herpesvirus type 2 were detectable.

The rest of the herd, including the cria, remain healthy and show no signs of bluetongue virus infection.

Lethal bluetongue virus infection in an alpaca

SIR, – We would like to report a case of lethal bluetongue virus infection in an alpaca in Germany. The affected animal was a five-year-old female alpaca, born and raised in a flock in a low mountain range area in central Germany. This area was affected by the bluetongue virus outbreak in Germany in 2007. Within a radius of 5 km, clinically evident bluetongue virus infection in sheep and cattle was reported, with high mortality in affected sheep.

The alpaca herd was housed in an open stable with unrestricted access to pasture during daytime, but was kept inside the stable at night (including dusk and dawn); however, the stable was not completely protected against flying insects.

Three months before its death the alpaca gave birth to a healthy cria, which

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