A study into the seroprevalence of antibodies to Toxoplasma Gondii in employees of the RSPCA

Dr Alan Hicks, 2001

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to measure the seroprevalence of Toxoplasma Gondii Antibodies in employees of the RSPCA. A total of 348 employees answered a questionnaire and provided a sample of blood for analysis. Of these, 37 (10.60% CI 7.36-13.83) were found to have a positive Dye test to Toxoplasma antibodies indicating past infection. The study shows a low rate of past infection and therefore presents a large population of ‘at risk’ employees.

An association was found between increasing age and likelihood of being seropositive (odds ratio of 2.34 p=0.006, CI = 1.26-4.28). Consumption of raw or undercooked meat over non consumption was associated with an increased chance of being seropositive (odds ratio of 2.32 p=0.014, CI = 1.18-4.58) and the frequent consumption of raw meat showed an odds ratio of 11.66 (p=0.013 CI = 1.68-80.9). An association was also suggested by respondents answering to whether they live or have ever lived on a working farm (odds ratio of 2.54 p=0.04, CI = 1.04-6.21).

No significant association between seropositivity and working with cats or having cats at home was found.

Key words: Toxoplasma Gondii; Toxoplasmosis; cats; zoonotic illness; animal workers; RSPCA.