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Corresponding Author: Prof. Maria Tempesta, DVM

Corresponding Author's Institution: University of Bari

First Author: Michele Camero

Order of Authors: Michele Camero; Vittorio Larocca; Michele Losurdo; Eleonora Lorusso; Giovanni Patruno; Vito N Staffa; Vito Martella; Canio Buonavoglia; Maria Tempesta, DVM

Abstract: Herpesvirus infections are generally subjected to strong host species restriction, although virological and serological investigations have revealed the possibility of cross-species infections in closely related animal species. In this study we evaluated susceptibility of goats to infection by Bubaline herpesvirus 1 (BuHV-1). Four goats were inoculated intra-nasally with BuHV-1 and monitored clinically, virologically and serologically for 42 days. None of the goats displayed clinical signs although all the animals variably shed the virus by the nasal route during the first 12 days after infection. BuHV-1 was also detected in the white blood cells of two animals in the first week post infection. The results suggest that goats are susceptible to BuHV-1 infection and that they could play an epidemiological role in the circulation/transmission of the virus among domestic and wild ruminants and impact to some extent on the control plans for herpesviruses in cattle.



DIPARTIMENTO DI
MEDICINA VETERINARIA

To The Editor in chief
Comparative Immunology,
Microbiology & Infectious Diseases
Prof. Henri-Jean Boulouis

Dear Editor,

I submit to your judgement the manuscript "Goats are susceptible to Bubaline herpesvirus 1 infection: results of an experimental study" by Camero M., Larocca V., Losurdo M., Lorusso E., Patruno G., Staffa V.N., Martella V., Buonavoglia C., Tempesta M., for publication on Comparative Immunology, Microbiology & Infectious Diseases.

As the corresponding author and on behalf of the other authors, I declare that the manuscript is original and has not been simultaneously submitted for publication in another journal.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Tempesta

Valenzano 19th September 2016

Prof. Maria Tempesta
Department of Veterinary Medicine
University of Bari
Strada Prov. Casamassima km.3
70010 Valenzano (BA) Italy
phone +39.080.4679838
fax. +39.080.4679843
e-mail maria.tempesta@uniba.it

Highlights

- Susceptibility of goats to Bubaline herpesvirus 1 infection
- Lack of clinical signs in goats after Bubaline herpesvirus 1 infection
- Epidemiological importance and impact on herpesvirus circulation
- Inclusion of goats in the control program

1 **Original article**

2

3 **Goats are susceptible to Bubaline herpesvirus 1 infection: results of an experimental study**

4

5 M. Camero^a, V. Larocca^a, M., Losurdo^a, E.Lorusso^a, G. Patruno^b, V.N. Staffa^a, V. Martella^a, C.
6 Buonavoglia^a, M. Tempesta^{a*}

7

8 ^a*Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Bari, Sp. Casamassima km 3, Valenzano 70010,*
9 *Italy*

10 ^b*Specialization School in Infectious Diseases of Animals, University of Bari, Sp. Casamassima km*
11 *3, Valenzano 70010, Italy*

12

13 *Corresponding author. Tel.: +39 80 4679838.

14 *E-mail address:* maria.tempesta@uniba.it (M. Tempesta).

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34 **Abstract**

35 Herpesvirus infections are generally subjected to strong host species restriction, although
36 virological and serological investigations have revealed the possibility of cross-species infections in
37 closely related animal species. In this study we evaluated susceptibility of goats to infection by
38 Bubaline herpesvirus 1 (BuHV-1). Four goats were inoculated intra-nasally with BuHV-1 and
39 monitored clinically, virologically and serologically for 42 days. None of the goats displayed
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61 **1. Introduction**

62 Bubaline herpesvirus 1 (BuHV-1) is an alpha-herpesvirus isolated in 1971 in Australia [1].
63 The virus was subsequently identified in Italy [2] and, more recently, in Argentina [3], indicating a
64 worldwide distribution.

65 BuHV-1 induces subclinical disease in water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*), which, thus far, is
66 regarded to as the primary virus host and reservoir. Recently, the DNA of BuHV-1 was detected by
67 PCR in the tissues of an aborted fetus of a water buffalo suggesting a possible association of the
68 virus with abortion [4].

69 Upon genome sequencing, BuHV-1 has been found to be highly related to Bovine
70 herpesvirus 5 (BoHV-5), responsible for meningo-encephalitis in calves and, to a lesser extent, to
71 Bovine herpesvirus 1 (BoHV-1), which is associated with infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR)
72 and infectious pustular vulvovaginitis (IPV) [5]. BoHV-1/BoHV-5 and BuHV-1 display a sequence
73 homology ranging from 87-93 % [6] and 97% [4].

74 In nature, most herpesviruses are strictly associated with a specific host species, and almost
75 all the animal species suffer from infections by at least one herpesvirus species. This situation
76 suggests that the herpesviruses have mainly co-evolved with their hosts, leading to a close
77 adaptation [7]. Cross-species infection studies with different ruminant alpha-herpesviruses have been
78 performed in cattle and serological investigations have showed a correlation among ruminant
79 alpha-herpesviruses. In particular, the potential role of ruminant species other than cattle as BoHV-1
80 reservoir has been investigated thoroughly [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13] and [14].

81 Furthermore, previous experimental studies that BoHV-1 vaccine-induced antibodies are able to
82 cross-protect goats and buffaloes against caprine herpesvirus 1 (CpHV-1) [15] and BuHV-1 [4].

83 However, the literature on susceptibility of ruminants other than buffaloes to BuHV-1
84 infection is limited and there is no information at all on susceptibility of small ruminants to this

85 virus. This could have important implications for BuHV-1 epidemiology and ecology. In order to
86 evaluate whether goats are susceptible to infection by BuHV-1, in the present study we
87 experimentally infected goats with a BuHV-1 isolate.

88

89 **2. Materials and methods**

90 *2.1. Experimental Design*

91 Four adult goats, two females (A, B) and two males (C, D), seronegative to caprine CpHV-
92 1, BoHV-1 and BuHV-1, belonging to flocks brucellosis and CpHv-1 infection free, were used.

93 The experiment has been carried out in the Isolation Unit of the Department of Veterinary
94 Medicine of the University of Bari according to the National Guide for Care and Use of
95 Experimental Animals. The experiment has been approved and authorized by the Body responsible
96 for animal welfare (OPBA) of the University of Bari and Ministry of Health (aut. n. 852/2015).

97 A Bubaline herpesvirus 1 (BuHV.1) strain gently supplied by prof. E. Thiry (University of
98 Liege, Belgium), grown on Madin Darby bovine kidney cells (MDBK) developed in Dulbecco-
99 Minimal Essential Medium (D-MEM) with 10% of bovine fetal serum was used. The titer of stock
100 virus was $10^{6.75}$ Tissue Culture Infectious Dose (TCID)₅₀/50 μ l.

101 All goats were infected by nasal route with 3mls (1,5 mls/nostril) of undiluted stock virus of
102 BuHV-1 and housed in separate boxes. During an observation period of 42 days the goats were
103 examined daily for general and local clinical signs and body temperature was recorded for 14 days.
104 Starting the day before the infection and then for 20 days post infection (d.p.i.), nasal, ocular, rectal
105 and genital swabs were collected for the virological investigations (isolation on MDBK cells and
106 PCR assay); heparinized blood samples for buffy coat were also daily collected to detect viral DNA
107 by PCR assay. Blood samples were taken the day before the infection and then at 0, 7, 14, 21, 28
108 and 42 d.p.i. to evaluate the antibody response to BuHV-1 by a neutralization assay.

109

110 *2.2. Virus isolation and titration*

111 Swabs were dipped in 1.5 ml of D-MEM and centrifuged at $5,000 \times g$ for 5 min. The
112 supernatant was treated with a 10% mixture of antibiotics (5,000 IU/ml penicillin, 2,500 $\mu\text{g/ml}$
113 streptomycin, and 10 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ amphotericin B) for 30 min at room temperature, diluted in serial 10-
114 fold steps, and inoculated in quadruplicate onto MDBK cells in 96-well microtiter plates. The plates
115 were read after 3 days of incubation, and the viral titers were calculated by Reed and Muench
116 method [16].

117 White blood cells were isolated from heparinized blood samples using the standard density-
118 gradient separation procedure (Lympholyte, CEDARLANE laboratories Ltd., Burlington, NC,
119 USA) and washed twice with RPMI medium before the use.

120

121 *2.3.DNA extraction and PCR*

122 Viral DNA was extracted from swabs and buffy coats using the commercial QIAamp tissue
123 kit (Qiagen GmbH, Hilden, Germany), according to the instructions of the company. The PCR was
124 carried out using a pair of primers (BuHV1F 5'- GGCGGTGCAGGTGTAGTC- 3'; BuHV1R5'-
125 CTCGCGCACGTCCGTCCTCACGCT- 3') constructed on a sequence of 360 bp of the gene
126 coding for the glycoprotein C (gene UL44) of BuHV-1 (accession nr. KF679678) (unpublished
127 data). The PCR was carried out in a total volume of 50 μl containing 5 μl of DNA sample, 2 μl of
128 10 \times PCR buffer, 1.5 mM MgCl_2 , 1.25 mM of each oligonucleotide triphosphate, 200 μM of each
129 primer, 1.5 U of Takara LA Taq (Takara Bio, Inc.), and 5 μl of DMSO and sterile water up to 50 μl .
130 The thermal profile consisted of 94°C at 2 min and 40 cycles at 94°C for 1 min (denaturation), 55°C
131 for 1 min (annealing), and 68°C for 1 min (polymerization), followed by a final extension at 68°C
132 for 10 min. Ten microliters of the PCR products was analyzed by electrophoresis in 1.5% agarose
133 gel after staining with GelRedTM (Biotium, Hayward, CA, USA) and visualized by UV trans-
134 illuminator equipped with software data acquisition and image processing (Gel Doc, Biorad,
135 Segrate Milan, Italy).

136 The specificity of the PCR assay was evaluated on BoHV-1 and CpHV-1 strains obtaining
137 negative results. Serial 10-fold dilutions of BuHV-1 viral suspension were tested to evaluate the
138 sensitivity of the PCR and viral DNA was detected in 10^{-6} dilution of the stock virus.

139

140 *2.4. Serological analysis*

141 Serial twofold dilutions of serum samples from 1:2 to 1:256, were mixed with 100 TCID₅₀
142 of BuHV-1 in 96-well microtitre plates. The plates were held for 90 min at room temperature and
143 20,000 MDBK cells were then added to each well. Reading was done after three days of incubation
144 at 37°C in presence of 5% CO₂. The titre of each serum was expressed as the highest serum dilution
145 neutralizing the virus.

146

147 **3. Results**

148 *3.1. Clinical examination*

149 None of the goats showed general or local clinical signs. Two animals (B and C) had a slight
150 transient arise of temperature (39.6°C) on d.p.i. 8 (goat B) and on d.p.i. 3 and 4 (goat C).

151

152 *3.2. Virological results*

153 The virological results are reported in the fig. 1.

154 Goat A shed virus only from nasal swabs from the 4th to the 8th d.p.i., with the peak of viral
155 excretion ($10^{3.50}$ TCID₅₀/50 µl) at the 6th d.p.i. Viral DNA was detected by PCR from nasal swabs
156 from the 1st up to the 10th d.p.i. All ocular, rectal and vaginal swab resulted constantly negative for
157 virus isolation and DNA detection by PCR assay. Viral DNA has been detected in the buffy coats
158 from the 1st to the 7th d.p.i.

159 Goat B shed virus only from nasal swabs from the 2nd to the 10th d.p.i., with the peak of viral
160 excretion ($10^{3.50}$ TCID₅₀/50 µl) at the 5th d.p.i.. Viral DNA was detected by PCR from nasal swabs
161 from 1st to 11th d.p.i. All ocular, rectal and vaginal swabs resulted constantly negative for virus

162 isolation and DNA detection by PCR assay. Viral DNA has been detected in the buffy coats from
163 the 1st to the 7th d.p.i.

164 Goat C shed virus only from nasal swabs from the 1st to the 8th d.p.i., with the peak of viral
165 excretion ($10^{5.00}$ TCID₅₀/50 μ l) at the 2nd d.p.i. Viral DNA was detected by PCR from nasal swabs up
166 to 11th d.p.i. All ocular, rectal and prepuccial swabs resulted constantly negative for virus isolation
167 and DNA detection by PCR assay. BuHV-1 DNA was not detected in the buffy coat.

168 Goat D shed virus only from nasal swabs from the 2nd to the 12th d.p.i., with the peak of viral
169 excretion ($10^{5.50}$ TCID₅₀/50 μ l) at the 4th d.p.i. Viral DNA was detected by PCR from nasal swabs
170 up to 13th d.p.i. All ocular, rectal and prepuccial swabs resulted constantly negative for virus isolation
171 and DNA detection by PCR assay. BuHV-1 DNA was not detected in the buffy coat.

172

173 *3.3. Neutralization test*

174 All the goats were negative for antibodies to BuHV-1 at d.p.i. 7. At d.p.i. 14, goats C and D
175 showed an antibody titer of 1:2, goat A 1:4 and goat B 1:8. At d.p.i. 21 the antibody titers arose to
176 1:4 in goats C and D whereas in goat A and B remained unchanged. At d.p.i. 42, the titers resulted
177 at the same levels detected at d.p.i. 21 (table 1).

178

179 **4. Discussion**

180 Usually, heterologous viral infections (i.e. infections of a virus common in a given animal
181 host in another host species) result is asymptomatic to mild-symptomatic infections, due to the
182 existence of host species barriers that restrict virus replication and naturally attenuate virus
183 pathogenicity [17] and [10]. In some cases, however, heterologous infections may determine severe
184 clinical pictures in the new host. Cercopithecine herpesvirus 1, also known as B virus or McHV1
185 [18] is an alpha-herpesvirus indigenous in Asiatic macaques. In its natural host, McHV1 infection
186 strictly resembles infection of Herpesvirus simplex 1 and 2 in humans. However, transmission of
187 McHV1 to non-macaque primates, including humans, can result in serious and often fatal

188 encephalomyelitis [19]. Accordingly, as predicting the behavior of heterologous herpesvirus
189 infections is not possible, *in vivo* experiments are required to assess more precisely what happens
190 when heterologous herpesvirus infections occur.

191 The data generated in the present study suggest that goats are susceptible to BuHV-1
192 infection even if the infected animals did not develop any clinical signs. Indeed, after nasal
193 administration, the virus was shed nasally for several days with relatively high titers. Although a
194 few animals were used in the experiments, all the animals shed the virus only by the nasal route.
195 Although viral DNA was detected during the first week post infection in the buffy coats of two of
196 the four infected animals (goats A and B), systemic spread and dissemination of the virus was not
197 observed since BuHV-1 was not shed by other routes (ocular, genital, rectal) than the nasal one.
198 Starting from the 14th d.p.i., neutralizing antibodies were found in the sera of all the animals,
199 indicating active sero-conversion.

200 Susceptibility of goats to BuHV-1 infection may be of relevance under an epidemiological
201 point of view. A major concern derived from interspecies circulation of herpesviruses in ruminants
202 is related to the increased interest in IBR eradication programs in cattle in Europe due to the
203 significant losses in bovine livestock industry. Eradication programs must necessarily take into
204 account the possibility of infection of cattle by heterologous, yet closely related, herpesviruses from
205 other ruminants. Also, eradication plans should consider the possibility of contact of cows with
206 heterologous hosts harbouring BoHV-1. For instance, BuHV-1, BoHV-5, CpHV-1, rangiferine
207 herpesvirus 1 (RanHV-1) and cervine herpesvirus 1 (CerHV-1) are antigenically and genetically
208 strictly related to BoHV-1 and they are all able to cross the host species barrier. This may challenge
209 the serological diagnostics because of the lack of specific assays able to discriminate between
210 BoHV-1 and closely related herpesviruses from other ruminants. Although improvements have been
211 reached using ag B/gE Elisa assay [20] and [21], thus far serological tests able to discriminate
212 between BoHV-1 and BuHV-1 are not available [14]. The presence of BoHV-1 related
213 herpesviruses in ruminants reared in the same areas where IBR is under control could impose

214 unjustified restriction measures in ruminant trading and, at the same time, the presence of
215 heterologous species bearing BoHV-1 may hinder eradication of IBR infection. Indeed, in extensive
216 farms more ruminant species may enter in contact, thus enabling the inter-species circulation of
217 pathogens. Several pieces of evidence indicate that transmission of herpesviruses among ruminants
218 is not uncommon [22].

219 **5. Conclusions**

220 In this scenario, and in the view of the results of our experiments, the possibility of natural
221 transmission of BuHV-1 from buffaloes to goats and vice versa can be hypothesized. Whether goats
222 may act as a reservoir for BuHV-1, as already demonstrated for BoHV-1 [23], [8] and [10], should
223 be considered. In addition, other pathogenetic pathways of BuHV-1 in goats should be investigated
224 with attention, including: i) the ability of BuHV-1 to cause reproductive disorders when the
225 infection overlaps with gestation and ii) the ability to trigger latent infections and to reactivate
226 under certain conditions.

227 Altogether, these pieces of information will be useful to understand more in-depth the
228 ecology of BuHV-1 in domestic and wild ruminants. Further investigations would be carried out to
229 assess the intra- and interspecies transmission of the virus. Also they will be useful, in the future,
230 when devising prophylaxis plans for the control of herpesvirus infections in buffaloes.

231

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235 2014”

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301

302 Figure Legends:

303

304 Fig1. Viral titers on MDBK cells from nasal swabs of goats intranasally infected with BuHV-1

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Table 1. Neutralizing antibody titers in goats after intranasal infection with BuHV-1.

GOAT	0*	7	14	21	28	42
A	<2	<2	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
B	<2	<2	1:8	1:8	1:8	1:8
C	<2	<2	1:2	1:4	1:4	1:4
D	<2	<2	1:2	1:4	1:4	1:4

* days post infection

Figure

