



## News release (short version)

### 2nd International CVBD Symposium in Sicily, Italy

## **Parasite-transmitted diseases in dogs – spreading, concomitant, preventable**

**Mazara del Vallo, Sicily** – Sicily is a hot spot not only for numerous tourists, but also for several parasites and severe parasite-transmitted diseases. This made the island the perfect venue for the 2<sup>nd</sup> International CVBD Symposium. 33 leading experts in natural sciences, veterinary and human medicine from Europe, the USA, Australia and Asia spent two days on discussing the current situation and future developments in the field of canine vector-borne diseases (CVBD). “There are many good reasons to deal with CVBD on a global and interdisciplinary scale”, said Dr. Norbert Mencke, Director of Global Core Brands Veterinary Services at Bayer HealthCare, Animal Health Division: “In a globalized world with high mobility, parasites spread with increasing speed. Moreover, climate change has a positive effect on many vectors. As a result, we see an increase of several diseases affecting humans as well as dogs.”

This second meeting of the ‘CVBD World Forum’ concentrated on two hot topics with high relevance for huge parts of the world: leishmaniosis and tick-borne diseases. Leishmaniosis is one of the most intensively studied vector-borne diseases. Experts from Italy, Israel, Spain and France provided latest data on the prevalence of canine leishmaniosis (canL) in their countries, which can vary in an endemic area from 25.6% up to 80%. One important aspect discussed was that both symptomatic and asymptomatic dogs are able to infect sand flies, the natural vectors of canL. “Since asymptomatic dogs do only have a random chance to be diagnosed, they are the most



important reservoir for canL from an epidemiological point of view,” explained Dr. Gioia Capelli from the University of Padova, Italy. She asked for more prevention with repellents during sand fly season.

The phenomenon of asymptomatic infections can also be found in humans. Prof. Jean-Pierre Dedet, CNRS University of Montpellier, France: “In the canL-endemic Alpes-Maritime region, 30% of the human population showed immunoreactivity to the leishmanial antigen.” Prof. Dr. Michael Day from the University of Bristol, UK, explained that the course of *Leishmania infantum* infection is mainly determined by the nature of the host’s immune response. Further presentations and discussions on leishmaniosis included aspects of diagnostics and treatment as well as environmental factors characteristic for endemic regions.

As reported by several CVBD World Forum members, dogs are often infected by more than one vector-transmitted pathogen. 53% of dogs co-infected with *Ehrlichia canis* and *L. infantum* have been found in Italy, 30% of dogs co-infected with *E. canis* and any other infectious pathogens in Spain. Especially when clinical signs are modified through co-infection, only PCR can provide the correct diagnosis, as shown by Dr. Gaetano Oliva from the University of Naples, Italy. Prof. Dr. Edward B. Breitschwerdt, North Carolina State University, USA, focused on anaplasmosis – a disease distinguished from ehrlichiosis on the basis of genetic analyses only recently. Both tick-transmitted diseases affect animals as well as humans. Human anaplasmosis has already been found e.g. in Italy and Poland with a prevalence of up to 30%.

One example for the dynamic spread of vectors and pathogens gave Prof. Dr. Dwight D. Bowman from the Cornell University, USA: within 50 years, heartworm disease has entered all 49 states of the USA and most of the Canadian provinces. “This process has been facilitated by thousands of dogs that move every year with families, military personnel, visiting students and tourists”, he said. His recommendation for Europe: “Take a more pro-active approach and make it mandatory to take preventative measures.” Different surveillance systems for spreading parasites were discussed.

Dr. Mencke: “The CVBD World Forum members are aware of the knowledge gaps still existing, especially in Asia or Eastern Europe. Apart from that, they see the need to provide more information about CVBD to the veterinarian as well as to the pet owner. Only if clinicians and pet owners are aware of a certain threat, they can take adequate preventative measures.”

### **CVBD World Forum**

The CVBD World Forum is a working group of leading experts in natural sciences, veterinary and human medicine from Europe, the USA and Australia and Asia. It has been founded during the 1<sup>st</sup> International CVBD Symposium in April 2006 in Billesley, UK, as a consequence of the increasing global threats through canine vector-borne diseases (CVBD). The main goal of the CVBD World Forum is to exchange knowledge and findings about ectoparasite-pathogen-host interaction as well as characterisation and assessment of pathogens' and vectors' distribution in order to increase awareness for the specific regional risks of CVBD and to foster preventative measures. This work is supported by Bayer HealthCare, Animal Health Division.

### **Bayer HealthCare**

Bayer HealthCare, a subsidiary of Bayer AG, is one of the world's leading, innovative companies in the healthcare and medical products industry and is based in Leverkusen, Germany. The company combines the global activities of the Animal Health, Consumer Care, Diabetes Care and Pharmaceuticals divisions. The pharmaceuticals business operates under the name Bayer Schering Pharma AG. Bayer HealthCare's aim is to discover and manufacture products that will improve human and animal health worldwide.

With sales of EUR 905 million (2006), the Animal Health Division is one of the world's leading manufacturers of veterinary drugs. The division manufactures and markets approximately 100 different veterinary drugs and care products for food-supplying animals and companion animals (dogs, cats, horses).

Leverkusen, June 22, 2007

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