

Trypanosoma evansi in capybara from Venezuela

Authors: Arias, José Francisco, García, Francisco, Rivera, Manuel, and López, Roger

Source: Journal of Wildlife Diseases, 33(2) : 359-361

Published By: Wildlife Disease Association

URL: <https://doi.org/10.7589/0090-3558-33.2.359>

BioOne Complete (complete.BioOne.org) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/terms-of-use.

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non - commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

Trypanosoma evansi in capybara from Venezuela

José Francisco Arias,¹ Francisco García,² Manuel Rivera,² and Roger López,^{3,1} Programa de Producción Agrícola Animal, Universidad Nacional Experimental de los Llanos Occidentales Ezequiel Zamora, Mesa de Cavaca 3323, Guanare, Estado Portuguesa, Venezuela; ² Facultad de Ciencias Veterinarias, Cátedra de Parasitología, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Maracay, Estado Aragua, Venezuela; ³ Instituto de Investigaciones Veterinarias, Maracay, Estado Aragua, Venezuela

ABSTRACT: During the slaughtering season of February and March 1991, 559 capybaras (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) were tested for *Trypanosoma evansi* in two areas in Venezuela: El Frio Ranch and El Cedral Ranch. Blood and serum samples were evaluated for *T. evansi*. Forty-eight (9%) of 559 capybaras had *T. evansi* using the microcentrifugation technique. Further, 279 (50%) of the 559 capybaras had antibodies against *T. evansi* immunofluorescence test in both ranches. Thus, capybaras may be important in the epizootiology of *T. evansi* in this enzootic area.

Key words: *Trypanosome*, capybara, immunofluorescence, *Trypanosoma evansi*, *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*.

The capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), the largest rodent in the world, is widespread in the Venezuelan savanna ecosystem, where it coexists with domestic horses and cattle, and other wild animals. It represents a strong potential source for meat and leather production (Toro et al., 1982).

In Venezuela, *Trypanosoma evansi* may be a limiting factor affecting capybara survival in the western plains; mortality in capybaras during the dry season may be caused by trypanosomiasis (Rangel, 1905; Ojasti, 1973; Azcárate and Bang, 1978). Mortality due to *T. evansi* infections has been reported in Argentina (Gutiérrez, 1958), in Brazil (Stevens et al., 1989), in Paraguay (Elmasian and Migone, 1904; Migone, 1910), and in Panama (Clark and Dunn, 1933).

By inoculating white rats and mice, *T. evansi* has been isolated from capybara blood from animals in apparent perfect health when captured from their natural habitat (Morales, 1978; Stevens et al., 1989; Reverón, 1992); it has also been isolated from capybaras with clinical signs (Ojasti, 1973; Arcay de Peraza et al., 1980).

Prevalence of *T. evansi* in capybaras in natural conditions has been reported at about 24% (Wells et al., 1975; Morales et al., 1976), 26% (Toro et al., 1982), 27% (Stevens et al., 1989), and 71% (Reverón, 1992). Some investigators believe that capybaras can act as a reservoir and thus play an important role in the disease epizootiology (Elmasian and Migone, 1904; Migone, 1910; Wells et al., 1975; Morales et al., 1976; Morales, 1978; Toro et al., 1982; Reverón, 1992); individuals of both sexes and any age can be infected (Toro et al., 1982; Reverón, 1992).

Our objective was to determine the prevalence of active infection, and the seroprevalence of *T. evansi* in capybaras to better understand the importance of capybaras in the epizootiology of *T. evansi* in enzootic areas.

Blood samples were taken from 559 randomly selected capybaras, both males and females older than two years of age and clinically healthy, from El Frío (7°45'N, 68°55'W) and from El Cedral Ranch (7°30'N, 69°26'W), in Apure State, Venezuela, during the slaughter season between February and March 1991. The animals were gathered in groups by people on horseback and of foot, killed by a blow to the head with a club, and butchered in the field; blood samples were taken both with ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid (EDTA) and without anticoagulant from 444 capybaras at Frio Ranch and 115 from El Cedral Ranch. Blood samples were centrifuged in a heparinized capillary tube by the microcentrifugation method of Woo (1969), and evaluated for active infection by *T. evansi*, as observed between the plasma and white blood cells through a binocular microscope at 10×. Serum was

used to detect antibodies anti *T. evansi* through the indirect immunofluorescent technique (IIF), using a capybara anti-immunoglobulin G (IgG) produced in goats at the Institute of Veterinary Research in Venezuela, and conjugated with isotiocianato of fluoresceina (Sigma Chemical Company, St. Louis, Missouri, USA); samples were diluted in saline phosphate buffer 1:20 plus Evans blue 1:100 (Garvey et al., 1977). Positive and negative serum controls diluted 1:20 were obtained from experimentally infected capybaras 9 wk after infection and animals raised in captivity, respectively. The test serum used was 1:20 to 1/2,560 and an antigen rat blood highly parasitized with a strain of *T. evansi*, isolated from capybaras from El Frío Ranch. Data were analyzed through linear regression using (PROC GLM) and Duncan's Multiple Range Test for mean separation (SAS Institute Inc., 1992).

Active infection of *T. evansi* was observed in 38 (9%) of 444 capybaras from El Frío Ranch, and in 10 (9%) of 115 capybaras from El Cedral Ranch. This difference was not significant ($P > 0.05$). Based on the IIF, antibodies against *T. evansi* were detected in 207 (47%) of 444 capybaras from El Frío and 72 (63%) of 115 capybaras from El Cedral Ranch; this was a highly significant difference ($P < 0.01$). Further, we observed 67 (32%) of the 207 antibody positive animals at El Frío had titers $\geq 1:320$, whereas 33 (46%) of 72 antibody positive animals at El Cedral had titers $\geq 1:320$.

There was no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the prevalence of *T. evansi* active infection by the microcentrifuge test and these values were lower than reported in trials made on capybaras from the Llanos Orientales of Colombia (Well et al., 1975; Morales, 1978). The authors inoculated white rats with blood from suspect capybaras, and obtained a prevalence of 24% (Well et al., 1975; Morales, 1978) or 23% (Morales and Carreño, 1976). The high percentage of active infection observed in that trial may be evidence that a more sen-

sitive method than the microcentrifugation test (MTC) was used. The MTC can detect chronic infection with low levels of parasites. A method like the MTC was not used in this study due to the high costs associated with it.

The IIF technique used in this research is valuable for diagnosis of trypanosomiasis under natural conditions. The results were highly significant in the Frío and Cedral population. The lower values (25%) reported by Toro et al. (1982) on capybaras from Guasdualito, Apure state, Venezuela probably resulted from their using the capillary agglutination method, which is less sensitive than the IIF. Reverón (1992) found a 71% prevalence in capybaras at El Frío Ranch using the enzyme linked immunoassay (ELISA); differences in results from animals of the same habitat could be due to the high sensitivity and specificity of the ELISA method. The high prevalences observed in absence of clinic pathological signs might be evidence the capybara is a natural reservoir for trypanosomes; this is supported by the trypanotolerance described by Murray et al. (1982) and Mulla and Rickman (1988). Some workers have reported infections of *T. evansi* on capybaras that resulted in clinical symptoms of trypanosomiasis (Arcay de Peraza et al., 1980). This occurred in the critical dry season when the reduction of water and grass sources might have caused a concentration of animals and hematophagous insects, further weakening of the capybaras; the infection processes may have led to their death (Ojasti, 1973).

We acknowledge the generous cooperation of the Department of Postgraduate Studies in Renewable Natural Resources of the Universidad Nacional Experimental de los Llanos Occidentales Ezequiel Zamora, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Institute of Veterinary Research of FONAIAP in Maracay, the Department of Parasitology of the School of Veterinary Sciences of the Universidad Central de Venezuela and the El Frío and El Cedral Ranches.

LITERATURE CITED

- ARCAY DE PERAZA, L., C. DIAZ MILA DE LA ROCA, AND J. OJASTI. 1980. Comportamiento de una cepa de *Trypanosoma venezuelense* (*T. evansi*) aislada de *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris* (Chigüire o Capibara) en animales de laboratorio. *Acta Biológica Venezolana* 10: 391–418.
- AZCÁRATE AND T. BANG. 1978. Sociobiología del Chigüire (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*). Tomo I. Tesis de Doctor en Ciencias Biológicas. Facultad de Ciencias Biológicas. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Madrid, Spain, 93 pp.
- CLARK, H., AND L. H. DUNN. 1933. Animal susceptibility to *Trypanosoma hippicum*, the equine trypanosome of Panama. *American Journal of Tropical Medicine* 13: 273–281.
- ELMASIAN, M., AND L. E. MIGONE. 1904. Mal de caderas des animaux domestiques et sauvages. (Epidemies paralleles). *Annales de l'Institut Pasteur (Paris)* 18: 587–589.
- GARVEY, J. S., N. CREMER, AND D. H. SUSSDORF. 1977. *Methods in immunology*, 3rd ed. W. A. Benjamin, Inc., Reading, Massachusetts, 545 pp.
- GUTIÉRREZ, O. 1958. El mal de caderas de los equinos. *Revista de Investigaciones Ganaderas* 4: 177–212.
- MIGONE, L. 1910. Le role des carpinchos comme reservoir de virus dans la conservation du mal de caderas. *Bulletin Society Pathology Exotic* 3: 524–525.
- MORALES, G. 1978. El capibara o chigüiro (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) como reservorio del *Trypanosoma evansi*. *Revista Colombiana de Ciencias Pecuarias* 1: 105–108.
- , AND F. CARREÑO. 1976. The Proechimys rat; a potential Laboratory host and model form the study of *Trypanosoma evansi*. *Tropical Animal Health and Production* 8: 122–124.
- , E. A. WELLS, AND D. ANGEL. 1976. The capybara *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris* as a reservoir host for *Trypanosoma evansi*. *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* 12: 572–574.
- MULLA, A. F., AND L. R. RICKMAN. 1988. How do African game animals control trypanosome infections. *Parasitology Today* 4: 352–354.
- MURRAY, M., D. Y. MORRISON, AND D. D. WHITE-LAW. 1982. Host susceptibility of African trypanosomiasis: Trypanotolerance. *Advances in Parasitology* 21: 1–69.
- OJASTI, J. 1973. Estudio biológico del Chigüire o capibara. Fondo Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias. Caracas, Venezuela, 273 pp.
- RANGEL, R. 1905. Nota preliminar sobre la peste boba y la derrengadera de los equideos de los llanos de Venezuela. *Gaceta Médica de Caracas* 12: 105–113.
- REVERÓN, Y. 1992. Tripanosomiasis en Chigüires (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) y su diagnóstico mediante el ensayo ELISA. Tesis de Licenciado en Biología, University Simon Bolívar, Caracas, Venezuela, 104 pp.
- SAS INSTITUTE, INC. 1992. SAS user's guide. SAS Institute, Inc., Cary, North Carolina, pp. 891–996.
- STEVENS, J. R., V. L. NUNES, S. M. LANHAM AND E. T. OSHIRO. 1989. Isoenzyme characterization of *Trypanosoma evansi* isolated from capybaras and dogs in Brazil. *Acta Tropica* 46: 213–222.
- TORO, B. M., B. R. LOPEZ, A. E. LEON, A. RUIZ Y A. J. GARCIA. 1982. Proteínas séricas y presencia de anticuerpos de *Trypanosoma* en Chigüire (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) de Guasdalito, Estado Apure. *Ciencias Veterinarias* 11: 47–53.
- WELLS, E. A., D. ANGEL, AND G. MORALES. 1975. Mammalian reservoirs of *Trypanosoma evansi* in the llanos orientales of Colombia, South America. *The Journal of Protozoology* 22: 57A.
- WOO, P. T. K. 1969. The haematocrit centrifuge for detection of trypanosomes in blood. *Canadian Journal of Zoology* 47: 921–923.

Received for publication 27 March 1995.