Seroprevalence of small ruminant lentivirus infection in goats in Thailand

T. Mongkonwattanaporn¹, P. Lertwatcharasarakul², P. Intaravichai³, T. Rukkwamsuk¹

¹ Department of Large Animal and Wildlife Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Kasetsart University, 1 Moo 6, Malaiman Road, Kamphaeng Saen, Nakhon Pathom 73140, Thailand
² Department of Pathology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Kasetsart University, 1 Moo 6, Malaiman Road, Kamphaeng Saen, Nakhon Pathom 73140, Thailand
³ Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Applied Zoology, HRH Princess Chulabhorn Collage of Medical Science, Chulabhorn Royal Academy, 906 Kamphaeng Phet 6 Road, Talat Bang Khen, Lak Si, Bangkok 10210, Thailand

Abstract

Small ruminant lentivirus (SRLV), which causes caprine arthritis encephalitis in goats and ovine progressive pneumonia (maedi-visna disease) in sheep, is classified in genus Lentiviruses belonging to Retroviridae family. It persists in infected goats and sheep, which mostly are subclinical. A serological survey was conducted to determine the prevalence of small ruminant lentivirus infection in Thai goat population. Serum samples were taken from 1,925 goats distributed throughout the country, then they were tested for the presence of SRLV antibodies using commercial indirect enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) test kits. Results revealed that a total of 68 goats were found seropositive, representing the apparent prevalence and true prevalence of 3.57% and 2.60%, respectively. The seroprevalence, revealed in this study, was lower than in the previous reports. The decreasing of seroprevalence might be caused by successful control strategies from Department of Livestock Development (DLD).

Key words: small ruminant lentivirus, ELISA, goats, prevalence
Introduction

Small ruminant lentivirus (SRLV), causing chronic progressive multisystemic disease in goats and sheep, is divided into several subgroups (A-E) (Grego et al., 2018). The virus causes slow progressive inflammatory lesions of the joints, mammary glands, lungs and brain of goats (Cork et al. 1974, Crawford et al. 1980, Narayan and Cork 1985). Goats exposed to SRLV may not show any clinical signs or may develop one or more of clinical syndromes such as polyarthritis, neurologic dysfunction, indurative mastitis, interstitial pneumonia or weight loss (Smith and Sherman 2009). SRLV can transmit both horizontally and vertically (Smith and Sherman 2009). In goats, lactogenic transmission has been assumed to be the major route of vertical transmission (Smith and Sherman 2009, Minguijon et al. 2015) by shedding the virus particles and infected macrophages and epithelial cells in the colostrum and milk. Direct, closed contact with infected animal is the main route of horizontal transmission (Smith and Sherman 2009), but the mechanism is not clearly understood (Reina et al. 2009). After infection, both humoral and cell-mediated immunity are induced in SRLV-infected goat but they are not protective (Smith and Sherman 2009). The specific antibodies of SRLV are produced lifelong with variation of titer (Minguijon et al. 2015).

SRLV is widespread around the world with high prevalence in countries with intensive goat rearing industries (Smith and Sherman 2009). It has been reported in several countries with high variation of prevalence after being first described in 1974 by Cork et al. (1974) in United States, such as 8.52% in goats in two localities in Egypt (Baraka et al. 2018), 0.4% in goats in Yucatan, Mexico (Torres-Acosta et al. 2003) and 23.22% in goats in southern Spain (Barrero Dominguez et al. 2017). In Japan, seroprevalences of caprine arthritis encephalitis virus (CAEV) infection in goats were reported in herd and animal level to be 15.0% and 10.0%, respectively (Konishi et al. 2016), while 8.8% was the seroprevalence in Selangor, Malaysia (Jesse et al. 2015) and 5.52% (Lin et al. 2011), level of confidence was 95% and 0.20 acceptable relative error). The minimal sample size was 1,643 samples as shown in Table 1.

Materials and Methods

Sample size calculation

The goat population in Thailand was estimated to be 832,533, according to data from Department of Livestock Development of Thailand. Goat population in Thailand was divided geographically into 5 groups: central, eastern, northern, western, and southern part of Thailand (Fig. 1). The sample size was calculated using Promesa version 2.3.0.2. for cluster sampling, the goat population were divided into 5 groups geographically and the farms in each group were randomly collected (expected prevalence was 5.52% (Lin et al. 2011), level of confidence was 95% and 0.20 acceptable relative error). The minimal sample size was 1,643 samples as shown in Table 1.

Sample collection

Sample collection was performed during October 2019 to February 2020. In total, 1,925 blood samples from 328 herds were collected from goat through jugular venipuncture with aseptic technique and transported in an icebox to laboratory. The description of blood samples is presented in Table 1.

The number of animals to be sampled from each herd was determined using the formula:

\[ n = \{1 - (1 - p_r) \}^{1/d} \times \{N - d/2\} + 1 \]

where N stands for population size of each herd, d is the minimum number of affected animals expected in the population, n is required sample size and \( p_r \) is probability of finding at least one case in the sample (Thrusfield 2005).

Sample preparation

Blood samples were centrifuged at 2500×g for 5 minutes to harvest serum. The harvested serum was stored at -20°C until determination of antibodies against small ruminant lentiviruses.
Seroprevalence of small ruminant lentivirus infection was estimated by using ProMesa Version 2.3.0.2. The apparent prevalence (\( \hat{p} \)) was converted to true prevalence (\( \hat{t} \)) using sensitivity (\( \alpha \)) and specificity (\( \beta \)) of the test (Rogan and Gladen 1987).

\[
\hat{t} = (1 + \beta - 1)/(\alpha + \beta - 1)
\]

The confidence interval for prevalence was calculated as follows:

\[
CI = p \pm z \times SE
\]

where CI stands for confidence interval, \( z \) represents the value obtained from the standard normal distribution, SE is the standard error of the proportion (Hazra A 2017).

**Results**

A total of 1,925 goat serum samples were included in this study. Sixty-eight goat sera showed as positive to small ruminant lentiviruses antibody (Table 2).

The overall apparent prevalence of SRLV infection in goats in Thailand was 3.57% (95% CI = 2.75-4.40) and true prevalence was 2.60% (95% CI = 2.18-3.02), respectively.
Discussion

In our study, the overall seroprevalence of SRLV infection in goat population in Thailand was 2.60%, which was relatively low as compared to the previous studies in the goat population of the western part of Thailand (Lin et al. 2011). Lin et al. (2011) reported the true prevalence of SRLV infection in the western part of Thailand being 5.52%. It may be caused by strategic plan from Thailand Department of Livestock Development, so called “CAE-free herd program”. Briefly, all goats in the farms should be tested for SRLV infection, the seropositive goats must be separated from seronegative goats and slaughtered within 7 days. Moreover, seronegative goats have to be re-tested in 6 months. Furthermore, in 2018, Thai goat population comprised almost entirely meat goats (96.38%, according to data from Department of Livestock Development of Thailand), which were at lower risk of infection than dairy goats (Lin et al. 2011).

However, the CAE is not yet eradicated in Thailand. This might be due to the fact that the “CAE-free herd program” is only implemented in goats and is voluntarily practiced by some farmers. Nonetheless, the strategic plan should also be implemented in other small ruminants since they can be infected and transmit the SRLV (Castro et al. 1999, Shah et al. 2004, Mselli-Lakhal et al. 2007, Gjerset et al. 2009). Therefore, the control and prevention strategies must be implemented in all farms throughout the country.

In this study, the number of positive samples was low. The positive predictive value (PPV) was 0.79. Though the sensitivity (100%) and specificity (99.8%) of the test were very high, the PPV would be increased when the studied population had higher prevalence.

Conclusions

In Thailand, the apparent and true seroprevalence were 3.57% and 2.60%, respectively. The current control strategies can decrease seroprevalence. However, to eradicate the CAE, the efficient control and prevention strategies should be strictly implemented in all small ruminant farms.

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References


Table 2. Seroprevalence of small ruminant lentivirus infection in goats in Thailand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Population number</th>
<th>Examined samples</th>
<th>Number of positive</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>104069</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.00-2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>115344</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.43-5.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>75302</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.62-5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>160844</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.75-7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>376974</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>2.44-5.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>832533</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>2.75-4.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact of natural sheep-goat transmission on detection strategies should be strictly implemented in all small ruminant farms.
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