

Journal of the Hellenic Veterinary Medical Society

Vol 67, No 4 (2016)



Predisposing factors and control of bacterial mastitis in dairy ewes

G. BRAMIS, A. I. GELASAKIS, E. KIOSSIS, G. BANOS,
G. ARSENOS

doi: [10.12681/jhvms.15641](https://doi.org/10.12681/jhvms.15641)

Copyright © 2018, G BRAMIS, AI GELASAKIS, E KIOSSIS, G
BANOS, G ARSENOS



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

To cite this article:

BRAMIS, G., GELASAKIS, A. I., KIOSSIS, E., BANOS, G., & ARSENOS, G. (2018). Predisposing factors and control of bacterial mastitis in dairy ewes. *Journal of the Hellenic Veterinary Medical Society*, 67(4), 211–222.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/jhvms.15641>

Predisposing factors and control of bacterial mastitis in dairy ewes

Bramis G.¹, Gelasakis A.I.¹, Kiossis E.², Banos G.¹, Arsenos G.¹

¹Laboratory of Animal Husbandry, Veterinary Faculty, School of Health Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

²Clinic of Farm Animals, Veterinary Faculty, School of Health Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Προδιαθέτοντες παράγοντες και μέθοδοι ελέγχου της μαστίτιδας βακτηριακής προέλευσης στις γαλακτοπαραγωγές προβατίνες

Μπράμης Γ.¹, Γελασάκης Α.Ι.¹, Κιόσης Ε.², Μπάνος Γ.¹, Αρσένος Γ.¹

¹Εργαστήριο Ζωοτεχνίας, Τμήμα Κτηνιατρικής, Σχολή Επιστημών Υγείας, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης.

²Κλινική Παραγωγικών Ζώων, Τμήμα Κτηνιατρικής, Σχολή Επιστημών Υγείας, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης.

ABSTRACT. Bacterial mastitis is a major health problem in dairy sheep worldwide. It is associated with reduced milk yield and occasionally involuntary culling of affected ewes, as well as insufficient growth and mortality of lambs. In general, the incidence of clinical mastitis in ewes during lactation is lower than 5%. However, the prevalence of subclinical mastitis is variable ranging from 10-30% or more. In clinical cases of bacterial intramammary infections, *Staphylococcus aureus* is dominant. In the case of subclinical mastitis the prevailing isolates are Coagulase-Negative Staphylococci (CNS). Moreover, predisposing factors related to the environment, genetics, udder morphology and nutrition, are likely to contribute to the occurrence of mastitis. Hence, control of the latter factors and bacteriological contamination during milking are the main preventive measures. The notion is that detection of the ovine genome regions involved in mastitis resistance will also facilitate the most effective control of mastitis in flock level. Appropriate genetic selection, together with the implementation of preventive measures, could reduce the negative consequences of bacterial mastitis.

Keywords: dairy ewes, genetic selection, intramammary infections, mastitis, risk factors

Correspondence: Georgios Bramis, Laboratory of Animal Husbandry, Veterinary Faculty, School of Health Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, University Campus, BOX 393, GR 54124, Thessaloniki, Greece.

E-mail: georgios.bramis@ceva.com

Αλληλογραφία: Γεώργιος Μπράμης, Εργαστήριο Ζωοτεχνίας, Τμήμα Κτηνιατρικής, Σχολή Επιστημών Υγείας, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Πανεπιστημιούπολη, Τ.Θ. 393, Τ.Κ. 54124, Θεσσαλονίκη, Ελλάδα.
E-mail: georgios.bramis@ceva.com

Date of initial submission: 18-12-2014
Date of acceptance: 20-04-2015

Ημερομηνία αρχικής υποβολής: 18-12-2014
Ημερομηνία αποδοχής: 20-04-2015

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ. Η μαστίτιδα είναι ένα από τα σημαντικότερα νοσήματα στις εκτροφές γαλακτοπαραγωγών προβάτων, με σημαντικές οικονομικές επιπτώσεις, καθώς σχετίζεται με μειωμένη γαλακτοπαραγωγή και περιστασιακά, με πρόωμη απομάκρυνση ενήλικων ζώων, μειωμένη ανάπτυξη και αυξημένη θνησιμότητα στα αρνιά, αντίστοιχα. Η αναλογία επίπτωσης των περιστατικών κλινικής μαστίτιδας είναι συνήθως χαμηλότερη από 5%, ενώ ο επιπολασμός των περιστατικών υποκλινικής μαστίτιδας κυμαίνεται μεταξύ 10% και 30%. Στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις, η μαστίτιδα είναι βακτηριακής προέλευσης. Τα αποτελέσματα ερευνών σε περιστατικά κλινικής μαστίτιδας γαλακτοπαραγωγών προβάτων έδειξαν ότι ο κυριότερος αιτιολογικός παράγοντας είναι ο *Staphylococcus aureus*, ενώ οι πηκτάση-αρνητικοί σταφυλόκοκκοι (Coagulase-Negative Staphylococci, CNS) είναι οι κύριοι αιτιολογικοί παράγοντες της υποκλινικής μαστίτιδας. Εκτός από το μικροβιολογικό αιτιολογικό παράγοντα, σημαντικό ρόλο στην πρόκληση της μαστίτιδας παίζουν προδιαθέτοντες παράγοντες, όπως περιβαλλοντικοί, μορφολογικοί, διατροφικοί και γενετικοί. Η λήψη προληπτικών μέτρων συνίσταται για τον περιορισμό του νοσήματος. Ο εντοπισμός γονιδιακών περιοχών που σχετίζονται με την ανθεκτικότητα στη μαστίτιδα, θα μπορούσε να δώσει χρήσιμες πληροφορίες για τον έλεγχο της μαστίτιδας σε επίπεδο εκτροφής. Η εφαρμογή προγραμμάτων γενετικής επιλογής σε συνδυασμό με τα κατάλληλα προληπτικά μέτρα, θα οδηγούσε στον περιορισμό των αρνητικών επιπτώσεων του νοσήματος.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: γαλακτοπαραγωγές προβατίνες, γενετική επιλογή, ενδομαστικές μολύνσεις, μαστίτιδα, προδιαθέτοντες παράγοντες

INTRODUCTION

Ovine mastitis can be specified as the inflammation of the ewe's udder (Schalm et al., 1971). Two forms of mastitis have been recognized according to its clinical features; clinical and subclinical mastitis. Clinical mastitis may be followed both by clinical findings (swelling, heat, redness, hardness or pain in the udder) and by abnormalities in milk (watery appearance, flakes, clots, or pus in the milk) (Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003; Olechnowicz and Jaskowski, 2014). On the contrary, in subclinical mastitis there are no obvious clinical findings, but, quantitative and qualitative changes in milk composition are usually observed (Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003; Fragkou et al., 2014).

Various causative factors are involved in the pathogenesis of ovine mastitis, with the most common being bacterial and viral agents. Among them, Staphylococci, *Mannheimia haemolytica*, Streptococci and Lentiviruses seem to be the most prevalent pathogens associated with the occurrence of mastitis (Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003; Turin et al., 2005; Contreras et al., 2007), whereas, less often, several other pathogens have been found to be associated with intramammary infections. The aforementioned pathogens can be broadly classified as contagious and environmental based on their viru-

lence and origin. In any case and irrespectively of the causative pathogen, many environmental and genetic factors have been found to predispose to mastitis in sheep (Larsgard and Vaabenoe, 1993).

Controlling for the risk factors and eliminating the causative agents of mastitis is crucial for modern dairy sheep farms, both for maintaining a high health and welfare status of dairy sheep and for the elimination of economic losses due to mastitis (Radostits et al., 2000; Barillet et al., 2001; Conington et al., 2008). Therefore, the last decades, ovine mastitis has been recognized as an issue of major concern for dairy sheep industry, which has resulted in an increasing body of research (Contreras et al., 2007). For example, recently, a project funded by the European Commission has been focused on the research of sustainable management on small ruminants' health problems, including mastitis and under the acronym 3SR-Sustainable Solutions for Small Ruminants.

However, extrapolating data from bovine mastitis is still the most common practice when approaching ovine mastitis and its control. Considering the noticeable differences between the two species, a more species-specific approach needs to be adopted. In the case of dairy ewes, current breeding programs focus almost exclusively on selection for high milk yield potential, which, com-

bined with the implemented intensive management schemes has lead to an increased incidence risk of intramammary infections and mastitis. Hence, the objective of this paper was to review the knowledge regarding risk factors and control measures against bacterial mastitis in dairy sheep.

ETIOLOGY

According to the available literature, Staphylococci are the major etiological agents of mastitis in dairy sheep flocks. Particularly, coagulase-negative staphylococci (CNS) and *Staphylococcus aureus* are the most commonly isolated bacteria in cases of subclinical and clinical mastitis, respectively (Bergonier et al., 2003; Leitner et al., 2004; Contreras et al., 2007). On the other hand, in meat and wool producing breeds of sheep, *Mannheimia haemolytica* is the most commonly isolated bacterium from mastitis cases (Mavrogianni et al., 2007, Omaleki et al., 2010). In a descending order, *Streptococcus* spp. (Marogna et al., 2010), *Corynebacterium* spp. (Spanu et al., 2011),

Enterobacteriaceae (Fthenakis et al., 2004; Mork et al., 2007), *Listeria monocytogenes* (Brugère-Picoux, 2008) and other bacteria have been found to be related with mastitis in dairy ewes (Table 1).

EPIDEMIOLOGY

The annual incidence of clinical mastitis is generally lower than 5% (Bergonier et al., 2003; Contreras et al., 2007). However, some authors have reported outbreaks where the incidence of clinical mastitis ranged from 30% to 50% (Lafi et al., 1998; Calavas et al., 1998), with an increased incidence of clinical mastitis being observed in the early lactation until weaning (Mork et al., 2007; Arsenault et al., 2008; Gougoulis et al., 2008). In the case of subclinical mastitis, a prevalence ranging from 5% to 30% has been found (Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003; Contreras et al., 2003; Berthelot et al., 2006). Bulk milk SCC (bSCC) has been used as an efficient and cost effective tool, in order to determine the epidemiology of subclinical mastitis at flock level (Lagriffoul et al. 1999; Bergonier et al., 2003).

Table 1. Bacterial causative agents of intramammary infections in dairy ewes.

Family	Genus	Species	Isolation Rate (%)	References
Staphylococcaceae	<i>Staphylococcus</i>	CNS (<i>S. epidermidis</i> , <i>S. xylosus</i> , <i>S. chromogenes</i> , <i>S. simulans</i> , <i>S.</i> <i>haemolyticus</i> ,	10.0-67.0	Gonzalo et al. (2002), Kanellos and Burriel (2002), Bergonier et al. (2003), Contreras et al. (2003), Fthenakis et al. (2004), Leitner et al. (2004), Contreras et al. (2007), Kioussis et al. (2007), Cuccuru et al. (2011)
		<i>S. fleuretti</i> , <i>S. sciuri</i>)	2.5-9.0	
		CPS (<i>S. aureus</i> , <i>S. hyicus</i> , <i>S. intermedius</i>)		
Pasteurellaceae	<i>Mannheimia</i>	<i>M. haemolytica</i> , <i>M. glucosida</i> , <i>M. ruminalis</i>	0.5-2.0	Mavrogianni et al. (2007), Omaleki et al., (2010)
Enterobacteriaceae	<i>Escherichia</i>	<i>E. coli</i> , <i>Klebsiella</i>	0.5-6.5	Fthenakis et al. (2004), Mork et al. (2007),
Mycoplasmataceae	<i>Mycoplasma</i>	<i>M. agalactiae</i> , <i>M. ovipneumoniae</i> , <i>M. conjunctivae</i>	0.0-60.0	Nicholas et al. (2008), Olechnowicz and Jaskowski (2014)
Streptococcaceae	<i>Streptococcus</i>	<i>S. agalactiae</i> , <i>Streptococcus</i> spp.	0.0-75.0	Zdragas et al. (2005), Contreras and Rodríguez, (2011)
Corynebacteriaceae	<i>Corynebacterium</i>	<i>Corynebacterium</i> spp.	3.5-11.0	Spanu et al. (2011)
Pseudomonadaceae	<i>Pseudomonas</i>	<i>P. aeruginosa</i>	0.0- 20.0	Leitner and Krifucks (2007), Contreras and Rodríguez (2011)
Bacillaceae	<i>Bacillus</i>	<i>Bacillus</i> spp.	3.0-6.5	Arsenault et al. (2008), Spanu et al. (2011)
Burkholderiaceae	<i>Burkholderia</i>	<i>B. cepacia</i>	5.0-17.0	Berriatua et al. (2001)
Clostridiaceae	<i>Clostridium</i>	<i>C. perfringens</i>	2.0-15.0	Mork et al. (2007), Fotou et al. (2011)
Enterococcaceae	<i>Enterococcus</i>	<i>E. durans</i> , <i>E. faecalis</i> , <i>E. faecium</i>	0.5-10.0	Marogna et al. (2010)
Mycobacteriaceae	<i>Mycobacterium</i>	<i>M. avium</i>	0.0-45.0	Nebbia et al. (2006)
Nocardiaceae	<i>Nocardia</i>	<i>N. farcinica</i>	0.0-15.0	Maldona et al. (2004)
Listeriaceae	<i>Listeria</i>	<i>L. monocytogenes</i>	0.0-5.0	Winter et al. (2004), Brugère-Picoux (2008)

RISK FACTORS

Flock management

Housing

Incorrect housing conditions may lead to clinical and subclinical mastitis. Substandard shed hygiene due to inappropriate stocking density, straw bedding and ventilation, increases the incidence risk of intramammary infections (Caroprese, 2008). Additionally, insufficient disinfection programs can promote the multiplication of environmental pathogens, which increases the risk of mastitis (Bergonier et al., 2003). In any case, housing conditions are strongly related to the overall management scheme, with permanently housed, intensively reared ewes, being more exposed to environmental pathogens in the sheep shed, when compared to semi-intensively or semi-extensively reared ewes (Gelasakis et al., 2010).

Milking procedure

Inappropriate milking practices may have a negative impact on the sanitary status of the ewe's udder. According to Bergonier and Berthelot (2003), the odds of new intramammary infections were higher when the personnel had received no training on the standard milking procedures. In these cases, inappropriate handling may result either in over-milking or in milk retention in the gland cistern, with both of them being associated with higher intramammary infection risk. In cases of hand-milking, the hands of milkers can be sources of pathogens, predisposing to mastitis (Mavrogianni et al., 2006). Moreover, incorrect milking machine function parameters (vacuum level, vacuum reserve per milking unit, pulsation rate and ratio) may decrease hygiene status of the udder by favoring bacterial colonization, leading to intramammary infections (Albenzio et al., 2003; Contreras et al., 2007). Cluster removal without previous cutting off the vacuum may also predispose to intramammary infections. Additionally, degraded water quality used for the cleaning and disinfection of milking parlors' pipes and clusters can facilitate the colonization of pathogens. The latter, may also be facilitated by old and eroded clusters (Bergonier et al., 2003).

In contrast to dairy cattle, in dairy ewes post-milking teat disinfection is not commonly practiced. Inappropriate sanitary status of teat dip solu-

tion may predispose to intramammary infections (Tzora and Fthenakis, 1998), especially when recirculating teat dip cups are used.

Feeding

Improper feeding may lead to clinical and subclinical mastitis. According to Koutsoumpas et al. (2013), lack of vitamin A may predispose to both clinical and subclinical mastitis. Similarly, vitamin E deficiency during the dry period, as well as increased gossypol consumption have been reported to contribute to occurrence of clinical mastitis (Fthenakis et al., 2004; Giadinis et al., 2011).

Preventive medicine-health problems

Among preventive medicine practices, the use of intramammary infusions of antibiotics, during dry period when implemented inappropriately, may facilitate the colonization of the teat duct canal with pathogens (bacteria, fungi), resulting in ascending intramammary infections (Las Heras et al., 2000; Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003). In any case, inadequate health status of the ewe plays a crucial role towards mastitis manifestation, affecting both animals' overall hygiene condition and their immune system function (Sordillo, 2005). Based on the results of recent studies by Mavrogianni et al., (2012, 2014) it can be assumed that trematodes and nematodes infections during dry period and lactation, respectively, may increase the incidence of mastitis. Also, teat lesion due to Orf virus infection forms a significant predisposing factor of intramammary infections resulted from local immunity relaxation (Mavrogianni et al., 2007).

Physiological factors

According to Waage and Vatn (2008), prolificacy may have a significant impact on the incidence of mastitis in meat ewes. Similarly, in dairy ewes, increased incidence risk of intramammary infections has been reported for ewes suckling two or more lambs (Arsenault et al., 2008; Koop et al., 2010); this could be due to teat lesions caused by teat bites during the frequent suckling events of lambs (Fragkou et al., 2007).

The stage of lactation is associated with the occurrence of intramammary infections. For example, Bergonier et al. (2003) indicated higher incidence of clinical mastitis, caused by *S. aureus*, at the

first weeks of lactation. Also, Kirk and Glenn (1996) and Leitner et al. (2001) observed a high prevalence of subclinical mastitis at the early stages of lactation. On the contrary, new intramammary infections during drying-off period are rarely observed, with the exception of sporadic cases (Las Heras et al., 2000, Leitner et al., 2001).

A relationship between the number of lactation and the sanitary status of the mammary gland has been documented by Leitner et al. (2001), who found a significantly positive correlation between parity number and intramammary infections incidence. On the contrary, Sevi et al. (2000) reported that mastitis infections were set in progressively earlier as parity decreased. A possible explanation could be the fact that natural defense mechanisms are less efficient in younger ewes.

Genetic factors

In dairy sheep breeds, the correlations between udder morphological traits, milkability and SCC have been found to be significant, indicating a relationship between udder conformation and its hygiene (Marie et al., 1999). According to Casu et al. (2010), Sarda×Lacaune backcross ewes with deep and pendulous udder and high implanted teats are more susceptible to overmilking which predisposes to intramammary infections. In another study, Gelasakis et al. (2012) reported that in Chios breed ewes, the combination of small size and horizontally placed teats coupled with inappropriate udder conformation can predispose to mastitis. Poor machine milkability results either in overmilking or retained milk in the udder cistern with negative effects on the mammary glands' sanitary status (Gelasakis et al., 2012).

The last decade, there has been an increased interest in studying the genetic basis of mastitis. In France, genetic analyses for mastitis resistance reported genetic predisposition to mastitis (Barillet et al., 2001; Rupp et al., 2006; Barillet, 2007). Recently, Bramis et al. (2014) investigated the genetic predisposition of mastitis in purebred Chios dairy ewes in Greece, using genomic analyses with a customized 960 SNP DNA array earlier developed as a part of the 3SR Project funded by the European Commission (Rupp et al., 2013; Sechi et al., 2013). Several polymorphisms were identified that affected mastitis related traits, as described in the next chapter.

CONTROL OF MASTITIS

Controlling mastitis is a challenging task for dairy sheep flocks, both in terms of sustainable production and for maintaining high health and welfare standards. A holistic approach should be considered for the most effective control of the possible risk factors, which are underlying intramammary infections. Within this approach the parameters needed to be implemented are listed below.

Treatment of mastitis during lactation

There are two operating axes for the effective treatment of mastitis (Mavrogianni et al., 2011); a) the immediate initiation of therapy and b) the intramammary antibiotherapy combined with subcutaneous or intravenous administration, in cases where generalized signs coexist. There are a large number of formulations which contain a wide spectrum or combination of narrow range antibiotics. Given that very few of them have special approval for dairy ewes, products with approval for cattle can be used as extra label use, taking into consideration the peculiarities on the withdraw period needed to be kept, for the milk produced for human consumption. Nowadays, beta-lactamines and macrolides are widely used under field conditions (Bergonier et al., 2003). Also, Bergonier and Berthelot, (2003) mentioned the necessity of complementary treatment by the parenteral administration of anti-inflammatory drugs. In addition, Kiossis et al. (2007) reported a program which led to limitation of subclinical mastitis during lactation using a 3-day intramuscular treatment with Penethamate hydroiodide in affected animals. In the same study, the results showed that the health status of udders entering the dry period was better.

General husbandry measures

In order to avoid intramammary infections due to environmental pathogens, general husbandry measures and high hygiene standards must be applied. Appropriate stocking density (2.0 to 2.5 m² depending on the floor type) bedding material (the quantity is determined by the type of material used) and ventilation (47 to 66 m³/hour) are crucial factors for the determination of the hygiene status inside the barn

(Caroprese, 2008). Additionally, frequent removal of litter and disinfection of the shed is recommended (Caroprese, 2008).

Well established weaning strategies may facilitate the prevention of intramammary infections. Hence, in intensive dairy sheep flocks, early weaning of lambs and/or implementation of artificial rearing are suggested.

Cessation of lactation can be done either progressively or abruptly. Recently, Petridis et al. (2013) found no significant differences between two methods regarding the incidence of mastitis for the subsequent lactation.

The replacement of the affected ewes (Saratsis et al., 1998) is considered as one of the main measures for the elimination of intramammary infections. Ewes affected by clinical mastitis should be separated and isolated from the rest of the flock until culling. Similarly, ewes with udder abnormalities and signs of chronic subclinical mastitis should be separated from the rest of the flock and milked at the end of milking. Such animals should be culled as soon as possible and definitely before the initiation of the following milking period (Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003).

Routine implementation of California Mastitis Test (CMT), in combination with microbiological tests and assessment of SCC, in milk samples obtained from randomly selected ewes, can offer useful information for control of ovine mastitis at flock level (Bramis et al., 2012). For this reason, monthly use of CMT, at least for the four first months of lactation period, is suggested (Bramis et al., 2012), as a part of a surveillance program against intramammary infections.

Milking procedure

The sanitary status of the udder may be significantly influenced by milking practices. Gonzalo et al. (2005) observed an improvement on the udder's health by optimizing milking machine's operating parameters. This requires a periodical revision of milking routines and detailed checking of milking equipment in order to ensure correct milking variables (vacuum level, vacuum reserve per milking unit, pulsation rate and ratio) (Contreras et al., 2007). In general, operating optimization need to be combined with the effi-

cient use of milking machine by the staff; this further requires the training of the staff on standard milking and general operating procedures. Following procedures similar to the ones applied by dairy cattle farmers, with species-oriented adaptations, warrants effective and hygienic milking, but, peculiarities of the farm (i.e. flock size), the staff and the animals should be always taken into consideration (Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003). For dairy ewes, Gonzalo and Marco, (1999) proposed the following operating parameters for the milking machine: 36 kPa vacuum level, 180 pulsations per min and 50% pulsation ratio.

For the cleaning of pipes and clusters the use of drinking water is suggested. In any other case, the bacteriological status of the water used should be periodically determined, in order to avoid intramammary infection outbreaks (Las Heras et al., 1999, Bergonier et al., 2003).

Prevention of new intramammary infections can be facilitated by using post-milking teat dipping. Several studies have revealed the effectiveness of the method, particularly, in highly infected flocks (Paape et al., 2001; Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003; Contreras et al., 2003). Different disinfectants have been proposed for teat disinfection with chlorhexidine, dodecyl benzene sulfonic acid, glycerol monolaurate, hydrogen peroxide and iodophors being some of the most commonly used (Nickerson, 2001). As resistance of bacteria against some of the aforementioned disinfectants has been reported, special attention needs to be paid on the appropriate implementation of teat dipping and the effectiveness of the disinfectant itself.

Nutrition

Oral administration of vitamins A and E and selenium during the last month of gestation and lactation has a positive impact both on performance and on immunological status of ewes and their lambs (Rock et al., 2001; Rooke et al., 2004; Koutsoumpas et al., 2013). In general, appropriate feeding and balanced nutrition are significant for the assurance of a high health status of the mammary gland.

Drying-off treatment

The aim of drying-off treatment is to eliminate

bacteriological agents of infected mammary glands and prevent new infections at the beginning of the subsequent lactation period (Gonzalo et al., 2004; Schwimmer et al., 2008). Thus, drying-off treatment has been found to significantly reduce the incidence of clinical mastitis in dairy ewes (Gonzalo et al., 2004; McDougall and Annis, 2005). According to Fthenakis et al. (2012), intramammary administration of antibiotics at the beginning of drying-off period should be part of health management programs during pregnancy. In such programs there is a debate whether generalized dry-off antibiotic therapy is preferable than selective treatment (Bergonier et al., 2003) as a spontaneous cure rate at parturition can be high for dairy ewes (about 20–60%) (Paape et al., 2001; Contreras et al., 2003; Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003). At the end of lactation, the lack of SCC threshold, as a selection criterion for ewes with subclinical mastitis, renders the selective intramammary treatment rather difficult to be established at flock level. This temporarily supports the generalized approach, in which case the overall cure rate of treated ewes may range from 65 to 95% (Ahmad et al., 1992; Chaffer et al., 2003).

Vaccination

Although there is no evidence that vaccines available on market are effective, they are widely used in cases of high incidence of gangrenous mastitis (Bergonier and Berthelot, 2003; Bergonier et al., 2003). Only a few studies have reported a remarkable effectiveness of vaccination against mastitis caused by *S. aureus* in dairy ewes (Amorena et al., 1994, Tollersrud et al., 2002). According to Melero (1994), a reduced prevalence of clinical mastitis but not of subclinical infections was observed, when a vaccine against *S. aureus* and *S. Simulans* was used. In some cases the use of autovaccines may be proposed, with unspecified results, though. Based on these observations, vaccination against mastitis related pathogens does not seem to be an effective tool for the prevention of intramammary infections in dairy ewes.

Genetic resistance

Breeding for resistance to mastitis in dairy cattle has been the subject of research over the last

decades (Herringstad et al., 2003; Odegard et al., 2005; Morris, 2007). The most sustainable method for mastitis control via genetic resistance is selective breeding; it requires a suitable selection trait or a molecular genetic marker, with adequate additive genetic variation of this trait (Chang et al., 2004; Odegard et al., 2005). Because of the high and positive genetic correlation between SCC and mastitis, selection for reduced SCC can be used as an indirect selection trait for the control of mastitis. Nowadays, there is significant evidence that there are adverse genetic correlations between resistance to mastitis and milk production traits in dairy cattle (Philipsson and Lindhe, 2003), but not in dairy sheep, yet. For this reason, 12 countries have included bovine mastitis in their breeding programs in order to control the increased genetic susceptibility to it resulted from the selection for increased milk yield (Mark et al., 2002).

A few years ago, Barillet et al. (2001) carried out for first time a genetic analysis for mastitis resistance in the French Lacaune breed. The goal of this study was to define a breeding strategy for improved udder health in dairy sheep using SCC as an indirect trait. In other studies, it was revealed a strong negative genetic relationship between SCC and milk yield during the first lactation (Rupp et al., 2006; Barillet, 2007). Moreover, researchers have found a genetic relationship between udder morphology traits and udder health in dairy sheep (Legarra and Ugarte, 2005; Sechi et al., 2007; Casu et al., 2010). In Greece, Gelasakis et al. (2012) reported that improvement of milkability, in Chios dairy ewes, can be achieved by genetic selection programs using udder traits associated with udder morphology, teat size and placement which is expected to further improve the sanitary status of the mammary gland. Significant differences regarding mastitis susceptibility, among different sheep breeds have, also, been observed. For example, Fragkou et al. (2007) reported a higher resistance against *Mannheimia haemolytica* for Karagouniko comparing with Frizarta ewes, due to a lack of lymphoid nodules in Frizarta ewes' teats. Although, these results need to be taken into consideration for genetic selection against mastitis, further analyses are necessary to validate their repeatability at population level in order to be used for breeding schemes

in specific breeds.

The detection of the ovine genome regions involved in mastitis resistance began with the first results of a Quantitative Trait Loci (QTL) detection program (Barillet, 2007). According to the results, QTLs for SCC were detected on chromosomes 6 and 16, allowing locating the genes that control resistance to mastitis. Swiderek et al. (2006) described a possible correlation between Toll-like receptor (TLR)-gene mutations and the susceptibility of the mammary gland to bacterial infections. This study also showed the associate breed-dependent aspects of SCC, bacterial infection and TLR-gene mutations in sheep and its data may serve as a benchmark for further study of TLR-gene mutation, facilitating the identification of one of the markers of natural resistance against sheep mastitis.

Within a European Commission funded research project ("3SR"), putative polymorphisms for ovine mastitis resistance have been found for Lacaune, Sarda and Churra sheep breeds (Rupp et al., 2013; Sechi et al., 2013). Based on these polymorphisms a 960 Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms DNA array was used for the validation of the effects of the selected markers on the mastitis resistance for Chios dairy ewes (Psifidi et al., 2014). These markers were found to be suitable for genetic selection against mastitis programs without compromising productivity potential of Chios dairy ewes (Psifidi et al., 2014). As a result of the same project, recently, Bramis et al. (2014) found that other than SCC mastitis-related

traits (total viable counts and CMT score) were heritable and thus suggested that they could be used as indirect selection traits when selecting for mastitis resistance in Chios dairy ewes.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Bacterial mastitis is an important and highly multivariable disease of dairy sheep presenting varying degrees of clinical manifestation and consequences. The characteristics of the intramammary infections leading to mastitis in conjunction with breeding and management particularities of dairy sheep emerge the need to establish specific mastitis control programs. Hence, a holistic approach including appropriate management practices (housing, feeding and nutrition, milking routine, preventive health) and targeted genetic selection should be considered for the most effective control of intramammary infections and mastitis. In particular, selective breeding for resistance against mastitis should be assessed as a tool for the most effective control of mastitis. Towards this target, several aspects need to be taken into consideration and further investigations are needed in order to reveal possible negative effects of selecting against mastitis on productive potential of dairy ewes.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have nothing to disclose. ■

REFERENCES

- Ahmad G, Timms LL, Morrical DG, Brackelsberg PO (1992) Ovine subclinical mastitis efficacy of dry treatment, *Sheep Res. J.* 8:30–33.
- Albenzio M, Taibi L, Caroprese M, De Rosa G, Muscio A, Sevi A. (2003) Immune response, udder health and productive traits of machine milked and suckling ewes. *Small Ruminant Research* 48:189-200.
- Amorena B, Baselga R, Albizu I (1994) Use of liposome-immunopotentiated exopolysaccharide as a component of an ovine mastitis staphylococcal vaccine. *Vaccine* 12: 243-249.
- Ariznabarreta A, Gonzalo C, San Primitivo F (2002) Microbiological Quality and Somatic Cell Count of Ewe Milk with Special Reference to Staphylococci. *J. Dairy Sci.* 85:1370-1375.
- Arsenault J, Dubreuil P, Higgins R, Bélanger D (2008) Risk factors and impacts of clinical and subclinical mastitis in commercial meat-producing sheep flocks in Quebec, Canada. *Prev. Vet. Med.* 87:373-393.
- Barillet F (2007) Genetic improvement for dairy production in sheep and goats. *Small Ruminant Research* 70:60-75.
- Barillet F, Rupp R, Mignon-Grasteau S, Astruc JM, Jacquin M (2001) Genetic analysis for mastitis resistance and milk somatic cell score in French Lacaune dairy sheep. *Genet. Sel. Evol.* 33:397-415.
- Bergonier D, Berthelot X (2003) New advances in epizootiology and control of ewe mastitis. *Livest. Prod. Sci.* 79:1-16.
- Bergonier D, de Cremoux R, Rupp R, Lagriffoul G, Berthelot X (2003) Mastitis of dairy small ruminants. *Vet. Res.* 34:689-716.

- Berriatua E, Ziluaga I, Miguel-Virto C, Urizarren P, Juste R, Laevens S, Vandamme P, Govan JR (2001) Outbreak of subclinical mastitis in a flock of dairy sheep associated with *Burkholderia cepacia* complex infection. *J. Clin. Microbiol.* 39:990-994.
- Berthelot X, Lagriffoul G, Concordet D, Barillet F, Bergonier D (2006) Physiological and pathological thresholds of somatic cell counts in ewe milk. *Small Ruminant Research* 62:27-31.
- Bonnefont C, Toufeer M, Caubet C, Foulon E, Tasca C, Aurel M, Bergonier D, Boullier S, Robert-Granie C, Foucras G, Rupp R (2011) Transcriptomic analysis of milk somatic cells in mastitis resistant and susceptible sheep upon challenge with *Staphylococcus epidermidis* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. *BMC Genomics* 12:208.
- Bramis G, Arsenos G, Psifidi A, Banos G (2014) Genetic parameters of mastitis related traits in dairy sheep. *British Society of Animal Science Annual Conference, Nottingham, 2014*:194.
- Bramis G, Gelasakis AI, Petridou E, Kiossis E, Arsenos G, Banos G (2012) Incidence of subclinical mastitis in intensively reared ewes in Greece. 27th Jubilee World Buiatrics Congress, Lisbon 2012, pp. 145.
- Brugère-Picoux J (2008) Ovine listeriosis. *Small Ruminant Research* 76:12-20.
- Calavas D, Bugnard F, Ducrot C, Sulpice P (1998) Classification of the clinical types of udder disease affecting nursing ewes. *Small Ruminant Research* 29:21-31.
- Caroprese M (2008) Sheep housing and welfare. *Small Ruminant Research* 76:21-25.
- Casu S, Sechi S, Salaris SL, Carta A (2010) Phenotypic and genetic relationships between udder morphology and udder health in dairy ewes. *Small Ruminant Research* 88:77-83.
- Chaffer M, Leitner G, Zamir S, Winkler M, Glickman A, Ziv N, Saran A (2003) Efficacy of dry-off treatment in sheep. *Small Ruminant Research* 47:11-16.
- Chang YM, Gianola D, Heringstad B, Klemetsdal G (2004) Effects of trait definition on genetic parameter estimates and sire evaluation for clinical mastitis with threshold models. *Animal Science* 79:355-363.
- Conington J, Cao G, Stott A, Bunger L (2008) Breeding for resistance to mastitis in United Kingdom sheep, a review and economic appraisal. *Vet. Rec.* 162:369-376.
- Contreras A, Paape MJ, Di Carlo AL, Miller RH, Rainard P (1997) Evaluation of Selected Antibiotic Residue Screening Tests for Milk from Individual Goats. *J. Dairy Sci.* 80:1113-1118.
- Contreras A, Luengo C, Sánchez A, Corrales JC (2003) The role of intramammary pathogens in dairy goats. *Livest. Prod. Sci.* 79:273-283.
- Contreras A, Sanchez A, Corrales J (2004) Health priorities in dairy goats. In: Daza, A., Fernandez, C., Sanchez, A. (Eds.), *Goat Livestock: Production, Nutrition and Health*. Ed. Agrícola Espanola, Espana: pp. 229-243.
- Contreras A, Sierra D, Sánchez A, Corrales JC, Marco JC, Paape MJ, Gonzalo C (2007) Mastitis in small ruminants. *Small Ruminant Research* 68:145-153.
- Contreras A, Rodríguez JM (2011) Mastitis: comparative etiology and epidemiology. *Journal of Mammary Gland Biology and Neoplasia* 16:339-356.
- Corrales JC, Sánchez A, Luengo C, Poveda JB, Contreras A (2004) Effect of Clinical Contagious Agalactia on the Bulk Tank Milk Somatic Cell Count in Murciano-Granadina Goat Herds. *J. Dairy Sci.* 87:3165-3171.
- Cuccuru C, Meloni M, Sala E, Scaccabarozzi L, Locatelli C, Moroni P, Bronzo V (2011) Effects of intramammary infections on somatic cell score and milk yield in Sarda sheep. *N. Z. Vet. J.* 59:128-131.
- Fotou K, Tzora A, Voidarou C, Alexopoulos A, Plessas S, Avgeris I, Bezirtzoglou E, Akrida-Demertzi K, Demertzis PG (2011) Isolation of microbial pathogens of subclinical mastitis from raw sheep's milk of Epirus (Greece) and their role in its hygiene. *Anaerobe* 17:315-319.
- Fragkou IA, Papaioannou N, Cripps PJ, Boscós CM, Fthenakis GC (2007) Teat Lesions Predispose to Invasion of the Ovine Mammary Gland by *Mannheimia haemolytica*. *J. Comp. Pathol.* 137:239-244.
- Fragkou IA, Boscós CM, Fthenakis GC (2014) Diagnosis of clinical or subclinical mastitis in ewes. *Small Ruminant Research* 118:86-92.
- Fthenakis GC (1994) Prevalence and aetiology of subclinical mastitis in ewes of Southern Greece. *Small Ruminant Research* 13:293-300.
- Fthenakis GC, Jones JET (1990) The effect of experimentally induced subclinical mastitis on milk yield of ewes and on the growth of lambs. *Br. Vet. J.* 146:43-49.
- Fthenakis GC, Leontides L, Skoufos J, Taitzoglou IA, Tzora A (2004) Case report: high prevalence rate of ovine mastitis, caused by coagulase-negative staphylococci and predisposed by increased gossypol consumption. *Small Ruminant Research* 52:185-189
- Fthenakis GC, Arsenos G, Brozos C, Fragkou IA, Giadinis ND, Giannenas I, Mavrogianni VS, Papadopoulos E, Valasi I (2012) Health management of ewes during pregnancy. *Anim. Reprod. Sci.* 130:198-212.
- Gelasakis AI, Arsenos G, Valergakis GE, Oikonomou G, Kiossis E, Fthenakis GC (2012) Study of factors affecting udder traits and assessment of their interrelationships with milking efficiency in Chios breed ewes. *Small Ruminant Research* 103:232-239.
- Gelasakis AI, Valergakis GE, Fortomaris P, Arsenos G (2010) Farm conditions and production methods in Chios sheep flocks. *J. Hell. Vet. Med. Soc.* 61:111-119.
- Giadinis ND, Panousis N, Petridou EJ, Siarkou VI, Lafi SQ, Poulitiotis K, Hatzopoulou E, Fthenakis GC (2011) Selenium, vitamin E and vitamin A blood concentrations in dairy sheep flocks with increased or low clinical mastitis incidence. *Small Ruminant Research* 95:193-196.
- Gonzalo C, Marco J (1999) Ordeno mecanico e infeccion mamaria en el ovino lechero. *Ovis* 60: pp 11-21.
- Gonzalo C, Ariznabarreta A, Carriedo JA, San Primitivo F (2002) Mammary Pathogens and Their Relationship to Somatic Cell Count and Milk Yield Losses in Dairy Ewes. *J. Dairy Sci.* 85:1460-

- 1467.
- Gonzalo C, Tardaguila JA, De La Fuente LF, San Primitivo F (2004) Effects of selective and complete dry therapy on prevalence of intramammary infection and on milk yield in the subsequent lactation in dairy ewes. *J. Dairy Res.* 71:33-38.
- Gonzalo C, Carriedo JA, Blanco MA, Beneitez E, Juárez MT, De La Fuente LF, Primitivo FS (2005) Factors of Variation Influencing Bulk Tank Somatic Cell Count in Dairy Sheep. *J. Dairy Sci.* 88:969-974.
- Gougoulis DA, Kyriazakis I, Tzora A, Taitzoglou IA, Skoufos J, Fthenakis GC (2008) Effects of lamb sucking on the bacterial flora of teat duct and mammary gland of ewes. *Reprod. Domest. Anim.* 43:22-26.
- Heringstad B, Rekaya R, Gianola D, Klemetsdal G, Weigel KA (2003) Genetic Change for Clinical Mastitis in Norwegian Cattle: a Threshold Model Analysis. *J. Dairy Sci.* 86:369-375.
- Kanellos TS, Burriel AR (2002) Production and novel quantification of haemolysins produced by coagulase-negative staphylococci isolated from subclinical mastitis in sheep. *New Microbiol.* 25:367-373.
- Kioassis E, Brozos CN, Petridou E, Boscoc C (2007) Program for the control of subclinical mastitis in dairy Chios breed ewes during lactation. *Small Ruminant Research* 73: 194-199.
- Kirk JH, Glenn JS (1996) Mastitis in ewes, *Comp. Cont. Educ. Pract.* 18: pp 582–591.
- Koop G, Rietman JF, Pieterse C (2010) *Staphylococcus aureus* mastitis in Texel sheep associated with suckling twins. *Veterinary Record* 167:868-869.
- Koutsoumpas AT, Giadinis ND, Petridou EJ, Konstantinou E, Brozos C, Lafi SQ, Fthenakis GC, Karatzias H (2013) Consequences of reduced vitamin A administration on mammary health of dairy ewes. *Small Ruminant Research* 110: 120-123.
- Lafi SQ, al-Majali AM, Rousan MD, Alawneh JM (1998) Epidemiological studies of clinical and subclinical ovine mastitis in Awassi sheep in northern Jordan. *Prev. Vet. Med.* 33:171-181.
- Lagriffoul G, Barillet F, Bergonier D, Berthelot X, Jacquin M (1999) Relation entre les comptages de cellules somatiques du lait de troupeau et la prévalence des mammites subcliniques des brebis estimée avec les comptages de cellules somatiques individuels, in: Barillet F., Zervas N.P. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium on the Milking of Small Ruminants. Milking and milk production of dairy sheep and goats, Athens, Greece, Wageningen Pers, The Netherlands*, pp. 151–156.
- Larsgard AG, Vaabenoe A (1993) Genetic and environmental causes of variation in mastitis in sheep. *Small Ruminant Research* 12:339-347.
- Las Heras A, Dominguez L, Lopez I, Fernandez-Garayzabal JF (1999) Outbreak of acute ovine mastitis associated with *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infection. *Vet. Rec.* 145:111-112.
- Las Heras A, Dominguez L, Lopez I, Paya MJ, Pena L, Mazzucchelli F, Garcia LA, Fernandez-Garayzabal JF (2000) Intramammary *Aspergillus fumigatus* infection in dairy ewes associated with antibiotic dry therapy. *Vet. Rec.* 147:578-580.
- Legarra A, Ugarte E (2005) Genetic parameters of udder traits, somatic cell score, and milk yield in Latxa sheep. *J. Dairy Sci.* 88:2238-2245.
- Leitner G, Chaffer M, Zamir S, Mor T, Glickman A, Winkler M, Weisblit L, Saran A (2001) Udder disease etiology, milk somatic cell counts and NAGase activity in Israeli Assaf sheep throughout lactation. *Small Ruminant Research* 39:107-112.
- Leitner G, Chaffer M, Shamay A, Shapiro F, Merin U, Ezra E, Saran A, Silanikove N (2004) Changes in Milk Composition as Affected by Subclinical Mastitis in Sheep. *J. Dairy Sci.* 87:46-52.
- Leitner G, Krifucks O (2007) *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* mastitis outbreaks in sheep and goat flocks: Antibody production and vaccination in a mouse model. *Vet. Immunol. Immunopathol.* 119:198-203.
- Maldonado LA, Hamid ME, Gamal El Din OA, Goodfellow M (2004) *Nocardia farcinica*--a significant cause of mastitis in goats in Sudan. *J. S. Afr. Vet. Assoc.* 75:147-149.
- Marie C, Jacquin M, Aurel MR, Pailler F, Porte D, Autran P, Barillet F (1999) De'terminisme ge'ne'tique de la cine'tique Lacaune et relations phe'notypiques avec la morphologie de la mamelle. In: Barillet, F., Zervas, N.P. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium on the Milking of Small Ruminants. Milking and Milk Production of Dairy Sheep and Goats, Athens, Greece. Wageningen Pers, Netherlands*: pp. 381-388.
- Mark T, Fikse WF, Emanuelson U, Philipsson J (2002) International Genetic Evaluations of Holstein Sires for Milk Somatic Cell and Clinical Mastitis. *J. Dairy Sci.* 85:2384-2392.
- Marogna G, Rolesu S, Lollai S, Tola S, Leori G (2010) Clinical findings in sheep farms affected by recurrent bacterial mastitis. *Small Ruminant Research* 88:119-125.
- Mavrogianni VS, Cripps PJ, Fthenakis GC (2007) Bacterial flora and risk of infection of the ovine teat duct and mammary gland throughout lactation. *Prev. Vet. Med.* 79:163-173.
- Mavrogianni VS, Cripps PJ, Tzora A, Skoufos I, Fthenakis GC (2006) Effects of hand milking on the bacterial flora of mammary gland and teat duct of ewes. *J. Dairy Res.* 73:353-356.
- Mavrogianni VS, Menzies PI, Fragkou IA, Fthenakis GC (2011) Principles of Mastitis Treatment in Sheep and Goats. *Veterinary Clinics of North America - Food Animal Practice* 27:115-120.
- Mavrogianni VS, Papadopoulos E, Gougoulis DA, Gallidis E, Fragkou IA, Orfanou DC, Ptochos S, Fthenakis GC (2012) Pre-existing gastrointestinal trichostrongylosis predisposes ewes to clinical mastitis after experimental mammary infection. *Proceedings of the 12th Greek Veterinary Congress (Athens, Greece)*.
- Mavrogianni VS, Papadopoulos E, Spanos SA, Mitsoura A, Ptochos S, Gougoulis DA, Barbagianni M., Kyriazakis I, Fthenakis GC (2014) Trematode infections in pregnant ewes can predispose to mastitis during the subsequent lactation period. *Res. Vet. Sci.* 96:171-179.
- McDougall S, Annis F (2005). Efficacy of antibiotic treatment at drying-off in curing existing infections and preventing new infections in dairy goats. In: Hogeveen, H. (Ed.), *Mastitis in Dairy Production. Wageningen Academic Press Publishers, The Netherlands*:pp. 523–528.

- Melero JC (1994) Mastitis en la oveja Latxa: epidemiologia, diagnóstico y control. Tesis Doctoral, Zaragoza, España.
- Menzies PI, Ramanoon SZ (2001) Mastitis of sheep and goats, *Vet. Clin. North Am. Food. Anim. Pract.* 17: pp 333–358.
- Morgante M, Beghelli D, Pauselli M, Dall'Ara P, Capuccella M, Rannucci S (1999) Effect of administration of vitamin E and selenium during the dry period on mammary health and milk cell counts in dairy ewes. *J. Dairy Sci.* 82:623-631.
- Morris CA (2007) A review of genetic resistance to disease in *Bos Taurus* cattle. *The Veterinary Journal* 174:481-491.
- Mork T, Waage S, Tollersrud T, Kvitle B, Sviland S (2007) Clinical mastitis in ewes; bacteriology, epidemiology and clinical features. *Acta Vet. Scand.* 49:23.
- Nebbia P, Robino P, Zoppi S, De Meneghi D (2006) Detection and excretion pattern of *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies paratuberculosis in milk of asymptomatic sheep and goats by Nested-PCR. *Small Ruminant Research* 66:116-120.
- Nicholas RAJ, Ayling RD, Loria GR (2008) Ovine mycoplasmal infections. *Small Ruminant Research* 76: 92-98.
- Nickerson SC (2001) Choosing the best teat dip for mastitis control and milk quality. *Proceedings of the NMC-PDPW Milk Quality Conference*:43.
- Odegard J, Klemetsdal G, Heringstad B (2005) Genetic improvement in mastitis resistance: Comparison of selection criteria from cross-sectional and random regression sire models for somatic cell score. *J. Dairy Sci.* 88:1515-1520.
- Olechnowicz J, Jaskowski JM (2014) Mastitis in small ruminants. *Medycyna Weterynaryjna* 60:67-72.
- Omaleki L, Barber SR, Allen JL, Browning GF (2010) Mannheimia species associated with ovine mastitis. *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* 48:3419-3422.
- Othmane MH, Carriedo J, San Primitivo F, De La Fuente LF (2002) Genetic parameters for lactation traits of milking ewes: protein content and composition, fat, somatic cells and individual laboratory cheese yield. *Genetics Selection Evolution* 34:581-596.
- Paape MJ, Poutrel B, Contreras A, Marco JC, Capuco AV (2001) Milk Somatic Cells and Lactation in Small Ruminants. *J. Dairy Sci.* 84:Supplement, E237-E244.
- Petridis IG, Mavrogianni VS, Fragkou IA, Gougoulis DA, Tzora A, Fotou K, Skoufos I, Amiridis GS, Brozos C, Fthenakis GC (2013) Effects of drying-off procedure of ewes' udder in subsequent mammary infection and development of mastitis. *Small Ruminant Research* 110:128-132.
- Petridis IG, Fthenakis GC (2014) Administration of antibiotics to ewes at the beginning of the dry-period. *J. Dairy Res.* 81:9-15.
- Philipsson J, Lindhe B (2003) Experiences of including reproduction and health traits in Scandinavian dairy cattle breeding programmes. *Livest. Prod. Sci.* 83:99-112.
- Psifidi A, Bramis G, Arsenos G, Banos G (2014) Validation of previously discovered markers for mastitis resistance in an independent population of dairy sheep. *British Society of Animal Science Annual Conference, Nottingham, 2014: pp.* 195.
- Radostits OM, Blood DC, Gay CC. (2000) *Veterinary Medicine: a Textbook of the Diseases of Cattle, Sheep, Pigs, Goats and Horses.* Saunders, Philadelphia, USA.
- Rainard P, Corrales JC, Barrio MB, Cochard T, Poutrel B (2003) Leucotoxic activities of *Staphylococcus aureus* strains isolated from cows, ewes, and goats with mastitis: importance of LukM/LukF⁺-PV leukotoxin. *Clin. Diagn. Lab. Immunol.* 10:272-277.
- Rock MJ, Kincaid RL, Carstens GE (2001) Effects of prenatal source and level of dietary selenium on passive immunity and thermometabolism of newborn lambs. *Small Ruminant Research* 40:129-138.
- Rooke JA, Robinson JJ, Arthur JR (2004) Effects of vitamin E and selenium on the performance and immune status of ewes and lambs. *The Journal of Agricultural Science* 142:253-262.
- Rupp R, Lagriffoul G, Astruc JM, Barillet F (2003) Genetic parameters for milk somatic cell scores and relationships with production traits in French Lacaune dairy sheep. *J. Dairy Sci.* 86:1476-1481.
- Rupp R, Bergonier D., Dion S, Hygonenq MC, Aurel MR, Foulon E, Foucras G (2006). Effects of SCC-based selection for mastitis resistance: first results from a divergent selection experiment in sheep *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress. Genet. Appl. Livest. Prod., Belo-Horizonte, Brazil.*
- Rupp R, Senin P, Sarry J, Bouchez O, Foucras G, Tosser-Klopp G (2013) Fine mapping of a QTL for mastitis resistance on OAR3 in Lacaune dairy sheep. 64th EAAP meeting, Nantes, France, 2013:597.
- Saratsis P, Leontides L, Tzora A, Alexopoulos C, Fthenakis GC (1998) Incidence risk and aetiology of mammary abnormalities in dry ewes in 10 flocks in southern Greece. *Prev. Vet. Med.* 37:173-183.
- Schalm OW, Carroll E J, Jain NC (1971) *Bovine Mastitis.* Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia, USA.
- Shwimmer A, Kenigswald G, Van Straten M, Lavi Y, Merin U, Weisblit L, Leitner G (2008) Dry-off treatment of Assaf sheep: Efficacy as a management tool for improving milk quantity and quality. *Small Ruminant Research* 74:45-51.
- Sechi S, Casu S, Casula M, Congiu GB, Miari S, Mulas G, Salaris S, Sechi T, Usai MG, Ligios C, Foucras G, Carta A (2013) Genome-wide association analysis of resistance to paratuberculosis and mastitis in dairy sheep. 64th EAAP meeting, Nantes, France, 2013:597.
- Sechi S, Salaris S, Carta A, Casu S (2007) Relationships between SCC and udder morphology traits in Sardinian sheep. In *Proc. 5th International Symposium on the Challenge to Sheep and Goats Milk Sectors, Alghero, Italy*:68.
- Sevi A, Taibi L, Albenzio M, Muscio A, Annicchiarico G (2000) Effect of parity on milk yield, composition, somatic cell count, renneting parameters and bacteria counts of Comisana ewes. *Small Ruminant Research* 37:99-107.
- Sordillo LM (2005) Factors affecting mammary gland immunity and mastitis susceptibility. *Livestock Production Science* 98: 89-99.
- Spanu C, Berger YM, Thomas DL, Ruegg PL (2011) Impact of intramammary antimicrobial dry treatment and teat sanitation on somatic cell count and intramammary infection in dairy ewes.

- Small Ruminant Research 97:139-145.
- Swiderek WP, Bhide MR, Gruszczynska J, Soltis K, Witkowska D, Mikula I (2006) Toll-like receptor gene polymorphism and its relationship with somatic cell concentration and natural bacterial infections of the mammary gland in sheep. *Folia Microbiol. (Praha)* 51:647-652.
- Tollersrud T, Norstebo PE, Engvik JP, Andersen SR, Reitan LJ, Lund A (2002) Antibody responses in sheep vaccinated against *Staphylococcus aureus* mastitis: a comparison of two experimental vaccines containing different adjuvants. *Vet. Res. Commun.* 26:587-600.
- Turin L, Pisoni G, Giannino ML, Antonini M, Rosati S, Ruffo G, Moroni P (2005) Correlation between milk parameters in CAEV seropositive and negative primiparous goats during an eradication program in Italian farm. *Small Ruminant Research* 57:73-79.
- Tzora A, Fthenakis GC (1998) Mastitis in dairy ewes associated with *Serratia marcescens*. *Small Ruminant Research* 29:125-126.
- Waage S, Vatn S (2008) Individual animal risk factors for clinical mastitis in meat sheep in Norway. *Prev. Vet. Med.* 87:229-243.
- Winter P, Schilcher F, Bago Z, Schoder D, Egerbacher M, Baumgartner W, Wagner M (2004) Clinical and histopathological aspects of naturally occurring mastitis caused by *Listeria monocytogenes* in cattle and ewes. *J. Vet. Med. B Infect. Dis. Vet. Public Health* 51:176-179.
- Zdragas A, Tsakos P, Kotzamanidis C, Anatoliotis K, Tsaknakis I (2005) Outbreak of mastitis in ewes caused by *Streptococcus agalactiae*. *J. Hell. Vet. Med. Soc.* 56:114-121.