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OCCURRENCE OF *COXIELLA BURNETII* IN RED DEER (*CERVUS ELAPHUS*) IN PORTUGAL

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Coxiella burnetii is a zoonotic agent that infects a wide range of animal species and causes the disease known as Q fever. Wild ruminants may be relevant in the epidemiology of *C. burnetii* infection. In order to investigate the significance of the wild red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) in the epidemiology of Q fever, a serological survey was performed on samples from 233 wild deer from the centre of Portugal. Specific antibodies to *C. burnetii* were detected with a commercial enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) (IDVet[®], Montpellier, France). We found that 5 samples (2.15%) were reactive for antibodies to *C. burnetii* and regarded as positive. Red deer from the centre of Portugal are exposed to *C. burnetii*. The study demonstrates that red deer could be reservoirs of infection for both livestock and humans.

Keywords: *Coxiella burnetii*; Occurrence; Red deer; Portugal