

# Brucellosi professionale nella macellazione degli ovi-caprini: studio di 5 casi di un mattatoio comunale della Sicilia orientale

V. RAPISARDA, M. VALENTINO\*, P. RAVALLI\*\*\*, C. FENGA, D. DUSCIO\*\*

Dipartimento di Medicina Sociale del Territorio, Sez. di Medicina del Lavoro, Università degli Studi di Messina

\* Dipartimento di Patologia Molecolare e Terapie Innovative, Clinica di Medicina del Lavoro, Università Politecnica delle Marche

\*\* Dipartimento di Medicina Interna e Patologie Sistemiche, Unità Operativa di Medicina del Lavoro, Università degli Studi di Catania

\*\*\* Servizio di Prevenzione e Sicurezza Ambienti di Lavoro, AUSL 7 Ragusa

## KEY WORDS

Human brucellosis; zoonoses; meat industry; animal handlers

## SUMMARY

«*Occupational brucellosis in slaughtering of sheep and goats: study of five cases from a municipal abattoir in south-eastern Sicily*». **Background:** *Brucellosis is a world-wild zoonosis of bacterial origin. In Italy, where reporting of the disease is mandatory, the incidence is 2.1 cases every 100,000 inhabitants, but tends to be higher in southern regions. However, the incidence decreased from 1999 to 2002.* **Cases:** *Five cases of occupational brucellosis, four slaughter-house operators and one veterinary surgeon, were reported in a slaughter-house in south-eastern Sicily employing 15 people.* **Results:** *A study of the slaughtering process for sheep and goats led to identification of 23 different operations, some of which involved greater probability of infection: animal consignment; unloading and leading animals from the stable to the trap; strangling and bleeding; skinning and removal of mammary glands; removal and processing of abdominal viscera; post-mortem examination; mobile equipment and facility maintenance, and washing/disinfection. All affected workers had participated in one or more of these operations.* **Conclusion:** *Eradication of brucellosis in stock-farms should lead to the disappearance of the human disease, since the two are closely related. Despite legislation aimed at eradicating brucellosis in cattle, which has been in force since 1992, the prevalence of the human disease has risen in Italy, especially in Sicily. Within the framework of prevention, occupational physicians should exercise specific surveillance of brucellosis risk by carefully examining the plasma antibody content of workers involved in the slaughtering process. Occupational health physicians should also provide ad hoc information regarding the infectious agent and modes of transmission during slaughtering operations as well as specific training in the use of protective equipment, which is the only way of providing protection from contagion by infected animals.*