SEROLOGICAL FINDINGS IN ANTARCTIC PINNIPEDS
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mammals are considered good bioindicators of environmental changes. However, the information available about the health status of the Antarctic marine mammals is very scarce and fragmented. In addition, human derived activities such as tourism and global warming could be compromising these populations. The aim of our study was to evaluate the health status of Antarctic pinnipeds from the South Shetland Islands. The animals studied included \textit{Leptonychotes weddelli}, \textit{Mirounga leonina} and \textit{Arctocephalus gazella}. As part of this study we have performed serological analyses on samples from 54 of these animals for the detection of antibodies against relevant pathogens in these populations: \textit{Neospora caninum}, \textit{Toxoplasma gondii}, \textit{Brucella}, \textit{Leptospira}, Morbillivirus and Influenza A virus. Antibodies against \textit{N. caninum} were found in fur (27.5\%) and elephant seals (83.3\%), however no anti \textit{T. gondii} antibodies could be detected. Anti-\textit{Brucella} antibodies could also be detected in Weddell (37.5\%) and fur seals (5\%). Anti-\textit{Leptospira interrogans australis} antibodies were found only in one Weddell seal and against serovar \textit{icterohaemorrhagiae} in one fur seal. Antibodies against Morbillivirus were found in Weddell (50-87.5\%), fur 27.5-67.5\%) and elephant seals (16.7-100\%) and anti-Influenza A virus antibodies in fur (5\%) and elephant seals (16.7\%). These findings indicate that these animals have been exposed to disease and highlight the need for further studies.