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Preface

On April 2–3, 2000, 33 representatives from leading laboratories in 11 countries on three continents joined together for the first scientific conference on spirochetal colitis of animals and humans at the Ekenäs Mansion in Sweden. It was at that time that the participants agreed to pursue publication of the conference proceedings in a refereed journal format so that a permanent record of the work presented at the conference would be made available to the scientific community. Because of its international audience and its focus on infectious diseases, *Animal Health Research Reviews* was identified as the ideal venue for dissemination of the information presented at the meeting. The organizing committee and conference participants are indebted to the staff at CABI *Publishing*, particularly Dr. Katie Deaton, Publishing Editor, Dr. Robert P. Ellis, Editor-in-Chief and Dr. Harley W. Moon, Guest Editor for their continued support and reviews of the conference contributions. Equally as important as the scientific contributions, the exclusive financial sponsorship of the publication of the proceedings by Novartis Animal Health and specifically the work of Kai Duven and Josef Szancer of Novartis Denmark are hereby acknowledged. The generous support provided by the Swedish Council for Forestry and Agricultural Research, Svinskötsel and the Wennergren Foundation also contributed to the success of the conference. The dedication of the conference secretary Märit Karlsson and the organizing committee, the elegant conference logo design by Ola Källberg and the Chairmanship of the conference participants made the conference a success. Also invaluable was the careful review of manuscripts by our peers, many of whom could not attend the conference, and the technical support of staff members at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the National Veterinary Institute in Uppsala and the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

This is the first of what we hope will be a regular event assembling the largest representation of scientists actively engaged in basic and clinical research on spirochetal colitis. The Ekenäs Mansion provided an informal setting that allowed free exchange of ideas and discussion of new concepts among the conference participants. This environment also facilitated the planning of future collaborations among researchers with common interests in this emerging field of microbiology.

The significance and consequences of *Brachyspira* infections in pigs have been recognized for decades, and colonic diseases caused by *B. hyodysenteriae* and *B. pilosicoli* are two of the most costly diseases of swine production with a worldwide distribution. By contrast, the importance of colonic spirochetal infections in animals other than swine and in humans is less well documented. New knowledge presented at the conference indicates that intestinal spirochaetes play an important role in colonic diseases in dogs, various species of birds and human beings.

The 14 contributions presented in this issue of the journal are varied in scope and style, from comprehensive literature reviews to original experimental studies and case reports. In the interest of organization, the journal contributions have been divided into pathology and basic research and spirochetal colitis in pigs, dogs, birds and humans. Included under pathology and basic research is a comprehensive literature review of the pathology and pathogenesis of colonic spirochetosis caused by *B. pilosicoli* and basic studies on *Brachyspira* outer membrane proteins that may be relevant to interaction with the host. The remaining contributions emphasize diagnostic approaches, such as detection of *B. hyodysenteriae* infections in pigs using serology and fecal culture, significance of *Brachyspira* variants causing disease in pigs, and epidemiology of spirochetosis in dogs, commercial chickens and game birds. Control measures aimed at the eradication of *B. pilosicoli* from a pig farm, prophylaxis with dietary zinc in a mouse model of swine dysentery, and mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance of *B. hyodysenteriae* also are presented. Challenging new information and in depth reviews on the relative contribution of *B. aalborgi* and *B. pilosicoli* to human spirochetal infections along with additional information on the prevalence of end-on attachment of spiral-shaped bacteria in colorectal biopsies taken from individuals in Norway are presented. Taken together, these data provide an impetus for further studies to uncover the significance of spirochetal infection in colonic disease of human beings.

In summary, this issue of *Animal Health Research Reviews* contains the latest information on colonic spirochetal infections in animals and humans and thus will serve as the most current source of reference material in this field. The Ekenäs conference concluded with wonderful memories of time spent together with old friends, discovering new friendships through productive scientific exchanges and a commitment to meet again on a regular basis.

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