

Research program IZS VE 04/16

Screening of feline blood-borne pathogens in northeastern Italy and development of diagnostic tools to minimize the risk of infectious agents transmission by blood transfusion

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The core feline blood-borne infectious agents for which testing is worldwide recommended in blood donation include feline leukaemia (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency viruses (FIV), Bartonella species, and haemotropic Mycoplasmas. In addition, other pathogens can be considered for screening of candidate blood donors based on the local epidemiological information, i.e. Cytauxzoon spp., Babesia spp., Hepatozoon felis, Leishmania infantum, Ehrlichia spp., Anaplasma phagocytophilum and Rickettsia spp. all transmitted by arthropod vectors. For these pathogens, little epidemiological information is available, particularly in northern Italy.

The general aim of this proposal is to minimize the risk of transmission of infectious agents to cats in the best cost-effective way. Specific aims are:

- 1) to evaluate the prevalence of blood-borne pathogens (BBPs) in cats in northern Italy
- 2) to define a screening panel for candidate and selected blood donors
- 3) to develop sensitive and cost effective diagnostic tools

The study will also contribute to address the diagnostic offer to public and private laboratories, veterinarians and cat owners.