INTRODUCTION

Toxoplasmosis is a worldwide parasitic zoonotic disease produced by the protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii* (*T. gondii*). This intracellular parasite can infect all warm-blooded animals including humans, marine mammals and birds [31, 49, 56, 67]. Animals from the Felidae family play an important role in the epidemiology and maintenance of the disease since they can complete the life cycle of this parasite; they are the definitive hosts that can excrete thousands of environmentally resistant oocysts [67]. Since its first description in rodents (*Ctenodactylus gondii*) in North Africa by NICOLLE & MANCEAUX in 1908, the parasite has been recognized as a zoonotic agent [31]. At that time, the detection of *T. gondii* appeared to be only of academic interest, but when WOLF *et al.* found an associated encephalomyelitis in infants during 1939 [49], *T. gondii* was identified as a cause of congenital disease. Currently, *T. gondii* is recognized as an important opportunistic pathogen of fetuses, newborns and patients with a variety of primary and secondary immunodeficiencies [81]. The most common source of infection for humans is through the ingestion of tissue cysts from undercooked meat, by eating food or drinking water contaminated with sporulated oocysts and congenital transmission [81].

Infection with the parasite can result in a broad range of clinical signs depending on the host animal species. *T. gondii* can be fatal in some species of marine mammals and marsupials [80]. However, only a small percentage of exposed humans or other animals develop clinical signs of the disease [57]. The most dangerous complications of toxoplasmosis are found in patients whose immunity has been depressed by malignancies and anti-tumor therapy, those with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) [42], or with immunosuppressive drugs following organ transplantation. Toxoplasmosis ranks high on the list of diseases that lead to the death of patients with AIDS [33]. Additionally, in case of maternal infection acquired during pregnancy, Toxoplasma can infect the fetus with variable severity, depending on the trimester at which the pregnant woman acquired the infection, and on the efficacy of the placental barrier [84]. The risk of congenital infection is lower when maternal infection occurs during the first trimester (10-15%) and higher when the infection occurs during the third trimester (60-90%) [83]. However, congenital infection usually leads to more severe disease when it occurs during the first trimester [69].

The seroprevalence of human toxoplasmosis can range from 10 to 50% in temperate developed countries to over 80% in developing countries of the tropics [73]. Mexico is among the developing countries where the infection is common due to environmental exposure. Sources of infection may vary greatly among different ethnic groups and geographical locations [42]. Infective oocysts are everywhere and can contaminate water, soil, fruits or vegetables [81]. Undercooked meat contaminated with tissue cysts may also be an important source of infection [84]. In Mexico, the seroprevalence ranges from 15 to 50% among the general population [81]. Mexico is a large country with a human...
population in 2010 of more than 112 million, spread all over the country, and with very different ecological regions including subtropical areas, arid regions, temperate regions (mountains), and a very large coastal area of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Areas with the highest prevalence are wet coastal regions of the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific (64%), while the arid region scored the lowest prevalence (13%)⁶. In many developing tropical countries, the presence of extensive or semi-extensive animal production systems (grazing animals) is very common, which increases the risk of contact with the agent⁷. The wide differences of seroprevalence among geographical regions may be related to several factors, such as dietary habits and climate variations. The latter has a significant influence on the presence and persistence of infective oocysts, especially in tropical conditions where the temperature and precipitation can maintain the soil moisture, so that the oocysts remain viable in the environment for long periods⁸⁹⁰.

In studies conducted on different populations of animals in Mexico, a wide distribution of the parasite has been found; reports exist on family pets (dogs and cats)⁹,10,11,12,13,14,15,50,54,56, as well as animal species raised for food production (poultry, goats, sheep and pigs)¹¹,13,34,50,60, and wildlife species.

The aim of this paper was to review the published literature about the current status of relevant epidemiological aspects of *T. gondii* infection in humans and animals from Mexico.

### HUMAN STUDIES IN MEXICO

**Adults:** The toxoplasmosis situation in the adult population from Mexico has been largely explored (Table 1). In a study in Merida, Yucatán, Southeast Mexico, a significant association between 100 cases of spontaneous abortion and infection with *T. gondii* has been reported. Antibodies to *T. gondii* were found in 47% of the studied population, using a Sabin-Feldman test with titers of 1:64 and 1:128⁵⁰. In another study conducted in Oaxaca (a state located in Southern Mexico), the general seroprevalence was 3.8% (124/3229), with a slight variation depending on the rural community sampled (range 1.3%-8.9%). All sampled communities were grouped in eight areas (I to VIII) based on altitude, longitude and topography. The highest prevalence rate was found in the Tehuantepec zone with 8.9% (zone VI), this area being where the highest seroprevalence was registered, whereas the coastal region of Oaxaca (with an altitude of 0 to 400 m) showed prevalence rates of 2.4, 4.6 and 5%. In the central and northern regions of Oaxaca, rates of 1.3, 2.0 and 2.7% were recorded. This large variation in the seroprevalence found in the same state is highly dependent on the geography and microclimates (humidity, altitude and temperature) of each particular region. However, the lower prevalence was associated to the almost total absence of cats and the lack of meat in their diet⁴. In 1992, from 29,279 blood samples evaluated from people in all the 32 states of the Mexican Republic, the highest prevalence rate was found in coastal areas (40-65%), in people with low socioeconomic status and also in women of reproductive age⁹².

In another study, 350 women with high-risk pregnancies were studied. From them, 122 (34.9%) were seropositive to IgG and 76 (20.7%) to IgM *T. gondii* specific antibodies. In the same study, a group of women with recurrent spontaneous abortions were serologically evaluated and presented a seropositivity of 44.9% for IgG and 33.3% for IgM *T. gondii* antibodies⁸⁷. Moreover, in the town of Comitan Chiapas, a southern Mexican state, a prevalence of 5% of *T. gondii* antibodies was detected in the general population and in 18% of women at risk of abortion⁹⁰.

The presence of antibodies to *T. gondii* in 59 cat owners through the indirect ELISA was investigated; 38 cases (64%) were positive to IgG and 70.8% of their cats were positive to IgG, 8.3% to IgM and 62.5% to IgA. Cohabitation with *T. gondii* infected cats, feeding them with leftovers and raw viscera, and lack of control over how to manage their feces were identified as important risk factors associated with humans becoming infected with the parasite⁹⁶.

In a public hospital in Durango, Northern Mexico, which is characterized by arid and dry environmental conditions, 343 pregnant women were evaluated for *T. gondii*. From them, 21 (6.1%) showed IgG antibodies but none (0%) IgM antibodies; a multivariate analysis showed that infection was associated with living in houses with earthen floors, residing outside the state of Durango, and consumption of turkey meat⁴⁴.

In another report from the same region, a comparison of the seroprevalence of IgG and IgM *T. gondii* antibodies among patients at a psychiatric hospital and a population of blood donors as a control group was performed. IgG antibodies were found in 25 (18.2%) of 137 psychiatric patients and 16 (8.9%) of 180 controls. Regarding IgM antibodies, psychiatric patients showed 4.4% compared with 2.2% in the control group¹. In the same region (Durango), a prevalence of IgG antibodies in 32 (7.4%) of 432 healthy blood donors was reported, with 8 (1.8%) of them being also positive to IgM. The infection with *T. gondii* was associated with contact with cats. It was also determined that prevalence increases with age and decreases with a higher education level¹⁹.

The prevalence of infection with *T. gondii* was investigated in two populations exposed to solid waste using an ELISA test. Seropositivity of IgG was 21.1% out of 90 scavengers and 8.4% out of 83 waste workers. Regarding IgM antibodies, 2.2% were presented in the waste collectors, but none (0%) in the waste workers. The seroprevalence was associated with the consumption of food found in the garbage and lack of education⁶. The epidemiology of infection with *T. gondii* was studied in people from three rural regions from the state of Durango, using an ELISA test. It was found that 110 (23.8%) of 463 individuals evaluated had IgG antibodies and 10 (2.2%) of these were also positive for IgM. The high prevalence of infection was observed in participants older than 70 years of age and those with good conditions in their homes. Infection was also associated with the consumption of meat from turkeys and squirrels². In another study, the usefulness of filter paper-embedded blood (FPEB) for the diagnosis of *T. gondii* in pregnant woman was evaluated; IgM, IgG and IgA avidity was determined. IgM detection in FPEB was 92% sensitive and 100% specific. The results indicated that FPEB is useful to infer the infection phase, and thus to speed clinical decisions in congenital toxoplasmosis management⁴. In a further study conducted in nine rural communities in the state of Durango, 439 pregnant women were evaluated through a commercial ELISA. In total, 36 (8.2%) women had IgG antibodies and 10 (2.3%) were also seropositive to IgM. All IgM positive sera showed high values of IgG avidity, suggesting a chronic infection. The seroprevalence was significantly higher in women of low socioeconomic status (14%) than in those with a higher socioeconomic status (6.6%). Multivariate analysis showed that infection with *T. gondii* had an association with dwellings with earthen floors⁸⁴.
In a community of Mennonites (ethnic German descent established in rural communities) from the state of Durango, it was found that 46 (30.3%) of 152 people had IgG antibodies to T. gondii and five (3.3%) also showed IgM seropositivity. The infection with T. gondii was associated with the presence of cats in homes, the consumption of livestock and pigeon meat, and the drinking of untreated water.

There have been studies on workers occupationally exposed to water, wastewater and soil in the state of Durango. IgG antibodies were reported in 4 (6.6%) of 61 plumbers, 17 (8.4%) of 203 construction workers and 10 (6.0%) of 168 gardeners; IgM antibodies were also found in three (1.5%) construction workers and four (2.4%) gardeners, but none (0%) in the plumbers. The multivariate analysis showed that infection with T. gondii was positively associated with eating unwashed fruits and the meat of farm animals.

In a cross-sectional study of 80 individuals with no history of previous contact with cats, seropositivity for ELISA IgG and IgM was found in 34.9 (20.7%) of 100 blood donors, 34.4 (19.9%) of 100 general population owners of cats, 35.5 (18.2%) of 180 pregnant women, 87.8 (46.9%) of 180 waste pickers, and 7 (4.1%) of 170 patients with accidents at work. Additionally, 10 (6.0%) of 168 gardeners; IgM antibodies were also found in three (1.5%) construction workers and four (2.4%) gardeners, but none (0%) in the plumbers. The multivariate analysis showed that infection with T. gondii was positively associated with eating unwashed fruits and the meat of farm animals.

Table 1

| Year | Region | State | Test | Category | Prevalence (%) | Patients tested | Reference |
|------|--------|-------|------|----------|----------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1989 | Southeast | Yucatán | SF | Women with miscarriages | 47 | 100 | Zavala-Velázquez et al., 1989 (99) |
| 1991 | Southeast | Oaxaca | IHA | General population | 5.1 | 3229 | Goldsmith et al., 1991 (64) |
| 1992 | Southeast Central Northern | Tabasco Estado de México Baja California Sur | IFA | General population | 67.5 | 29 279 | Velasco-Castrejón et al., 1992 (97) |
| 1995 | Central | Mexico | ELISA | Pregnant women Women with Miscarriages | 34.9 IgG 20.7 IgM 44.9 IgG 33.3 IgM | 350 | Galvan-Ramírez et al., 1995 (57) |
| 1999 | Southeast | Chiapas | IFA | General Population Pregnant women | 5 18 | 50 | Romero-Cabello et al., 1998 (90) |
| 2006 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | General population owners cats Pregnant women | 64 IgG 6.1 IgG | 59 | Galvan-Ramírez et al., 1999 (56) |
| 2006 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Mentally-ill patients Blood donors | 18.2 IgG 4.4 IgM 8.9 IgG 2.2 IgM | 137 | 180 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2006 (1) |
| 2007 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Blood donors | 7.4 IgG 1.8 IgM | 432 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2007 (19) |
| 2008 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Waste pickers Waste workers | 21.1 IgG 2.2 IgM 8.4 IgG | 90 | 83 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2008 (16) |
| 2008 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Rural population | 23.8 IgG 2.2 IgM | 463 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2008 (2) |
| 2009 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Pregnant women | 8.2 IgG 2.3 IgM | 439 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2009 (28) |
| 2010 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Rural population (Mennonites) | 30.3 IgG 3.3 IgM | 152 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2010 (22) |
| 2010 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Plumbers Construction workers Gardeners | 6.6 IgG 8.4 IgG 1.4 IgM 6 IgG 2.4 IgM | 61 | 203 | 168 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2010 (17) |
| 2011 | Southeast | Yucatán | ELISA | General population without cats contact | 25 IgG 37 IgM | 80 | Jiménez-Coello et al., 2011 (69) |
| 2011 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Mentally-ill patients General population | 20 IgG 5.3 IgG | 50 | 150 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2011 (29) |
| 2011 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | General population | 6.1 IgG 2.1 IgM | 974 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2011 (7) |
| 2011 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Butchers General population | 7 IgG 4 1 IgM 9 IgG 2 IgM | 124 | 248 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2011 (14) |
| 2011 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Patients with liver disease General population | 13.3 IgG 2.7 IgM 10.7 IgG 3.3 IgM | 75 | 150 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2011 (26) |
| 2011 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Fruit and vegetable workers General population | 7.5 IgG 1 1 IgM 7.8 IgG 2.8 IgM | 200 | 400 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2011 (6) |
| 2012 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Rural population | 22.4 IgG 9.6 IgM | 156 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2012 (5) |
| 2012 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Patients with accidents at work General population | 8.3 IgG 0.8 IgM 5.3 IgG 2.3 IgM | 133 | 266 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2012 (27) |
| 2012 | Northern | Durango | ELISA | Elderly people | 12 IgG 2.9 IgM | 483 | Alvarado-Esquivel et al., 2012 (13) |
| 2012 | Southeast | Yucatán | PCR | Women with miscarriages | 55 IgG 20 IgM 19 PCR | 100 | Vado-Solis et al., 2012 (95) |

ELISA: Enzyme-Linked ImmunoSorbent Assay. PCR: Polymerase Chain Reaction. SF: Sabin Feldman Technique. IFA: Indirect Fluorescent Antibody technique. IHA: Indirect Haemagglutination test.
positive association with infection with T. gondii. In a study conducted in the state of Yucatán (Southeastern Mexico) in 100 women with spontaneous abortion, it was found that 58 had antibodies to T. gondii; 32 were positive to IgG; two to IgM; five to both IgG and IgM; six were positive to IgG and PCR; one to IgM and PCR; and 12 to IgG, IgM and PCR. Therefore, 55% of women were seropositive to at least IgG, 20% to IgM and 19% to PCR.

The Mexican national seroprevalence of T. gondii reported from two national bank sera was 60.1% to 62.6%. Coastal states and children showed the highest prevalences, while the wheat region showed a lower number of positive cases. A positive correlation of positive cases was associated with environmental temperature from 21 states where the prevalence was higher. In a recent meta-analysis of Toxoplasma gondii infection among the Mexican population from 1951 until 2012, the average prevalence was 27.97% and the weighted prevalence 19.27%. The weighted prevalence was higher in women with spontaneous abortions (35.1%), immunocompromised patients (28.54%) and mental patients (38.52%). The infection with T. gondii among the Mexican population showed a downward trend of 0.1%/year over a period of six years, which represents a decrease in the prevalence of 5.8%.

Immunodeficient patients: In a retrospective study from 1988 to 1993 in 177 patients with AIDS in Mexico City, nine (5.09%) of them developed toxoplasmosis. In two patients, the initial manifestation of HIV infection was toxoplasmic meningoencephalitis and the remaining seven had been diagnosed with AIDS, with an average of ten months between the first event and the diagnosis of toxoplasmosis. In the same study, the count of TCD4+ cells was performed simultaneously to the diagnosis of toxoplasmosis, finding a mean of 78 cells/µL. These findings are in agreement with the common features of cerebral toxoplasmosis in HIV-infected patients with CD4+ cells below 100/µL. These findings show the importance of monitoring patients with HIV antibodies due to the high risk of cerebral toxoplasmosis, which is the second leading cause of death in these patients.

In the state of Yucatán, an IgG antibodies prevalence of 47% was found in 95 patients with HIV type 1. In the same study, 69% of 100 HIV-negative blood donors were used as a control group. The high prevalence in both groups suggested that toxoplasmosis was an endemic zoonosis in the Southeastern Mexico.

A seroprevalence from 85 patients with hearing impairments in Durango, Mexico associated with Toxoplasma gondii IgG antibodies was studied, finding 8.2% positive cases. There were also positive cases in 10% of 50 patients undergoing hemodialysis, in 12.9% of 234 patients with visual impairments, and 6.8% of 103 persons at risk of immunosuppression. In total, 47 (10.0%) of 472 subjects had IgG antibodies to T. gondii and six (1.3%) of them also showed IgM antibodies. The infection with T. gondii was significantly associated with the consumption of undercooked meat, ingestion of raw cow’s milk, the presence of cats in the household, and raising animals.

Infants: The earliest report of T. gondii in children in Mexico dates from 1976, when five cases of fatal toxoplasmosis were reported from...
the “Hospital Infantil de Mexico”. In all cases, the parasite was identified in brain tissue and in some cases in the liver and lungs. Considering the early beginning of the neurological manifestations and severity of brain injuries reported, it was assumed that the five cases were of prenatal toxoplasmosis. Likewise, in another early survey from the central region of Mexico, 667 children were reported with the presence of specific antibodies of T. gondii. Further investigations demonstrated a positive relationship between the indirect immunofluorescence (IFI) to T. gondii and clinical findings in a population of 328 children with cerebral palsy.

In a screening study conducted with 1003 newborn infants, two asymptomatic cases positive to ELISA IgM and IgG were found demonstrating that the ratio is about two cases of congenital toxoplasmosis per 1,000 newborns in Mexico City. A toxoplasmosis case in a 7-year-old child who received a liver transplant was described as demonstrating seroconversion to T. gondii antibodies after surgery; six months later, lesions compatible with T. gondii and CMV chorioretinitis appeared. The patient was treated and clinical manifestations improved and remained stable for 12 months until the recurrence of new lesions in the retina. These data concluded the feasibility of T. gondii transmission after organ transplantation. In another study IgG subclasses against T. gondii were detected in mother/newborn pairs. Antibodies of the IgG2 subclasses were more frequent among congenitally infected newborns than in non-infected. Active fetal antibody synthesis of the 4 subclasses was also demonstrated, IgG3 and IgG4 being related to clinical problems and IgG1 to protection from damage. The identification of IgG2, IgG3 and IgG4 in newborns and the comparison with the response of their mothers helped to diagnose congenital transmission early after birth. This method of early diagnosis is consistent with previous studies. In the case of congenital transmission, T. gondii strain I was identified in four mothers and their newborns. These results provide information regarding the strains present in humans, but found no relationship between parasite load and genotype of T. gondii with vertical transmission. Two congenital cases of newborns showed severe disease, one fatal soon after birth and the other was born asymptomatic but developed a mild problem later on. In a recent systematic review database, the prevalence of infection with T. gondii was 0.61% from 4833 asymptomatic newborns, whereas in 895 symptomatic newborns a prevalence of 3.0% was found. There are few studies concerning the genotype of T. gondii circulating in Mexico. No data on frequency in other regions about infecting genotypes is available.

STUDIES IN ANIMALS

Several studies on toxoplasmosis have been conducted in the different animal populations in Mexico, where a wide distribution of the parasite has been observed (Table 2).

Poultry: The prevalence of T. gondii in free breeding chickens (Gallus domesticus) is a good indicator of the presence of the parasite in the environment because chickens feed from the ground. In the first report made on free breeding chickens in Mexico, the presence of antibodies specific to T. gondii was found in 13 (6.2%) of 208 birds using a modified agglutination test. Likewise, T. gondii was isolated from six chickens and the genotyping of five isolates were type III and one was an isolate of type I.

Recent studies have reported antibodies to T. gondii in wild birds, using the modified agglutination test. Seropositivity was found in 17 (2.6%) of 653 birds, which included one out of two “Curve-billed thrashers” (Toxostoma curvirostre), two out of four ducks (one Anas platyrhynchos and one Anas diaz), one out of two eagles (Aquila sp), five (27.8%) out of 18 Mexican grackles (Quiscalus mexicanus), seven (1.3%) of 521 pigeons (Columbia livia) and one (14.3%) out of seven quails (Coturnix coturnix). T. gondii was isolated in one out of six seropositive pigeons. The DNA obtained revealed the presence of an atypical genotype. In another study, antibodies to T. gondii were found in 36 (6.9%) of 519 chickens (Gallus domesticus) using the modified agglutination test. The seroprevalence of T. gondii was significantly higher in chickens raised in backyards (25.5%) than those raised on farms (4.9%).

Cats: Domestic cats and wild felines are involved in the full cycle of T. gondii, because they can host sexually mature parasites in their gastrointestinal tract and excrete oocysts in their feces. In a study conducted between 1984 and 1999 in North, Central and South America, antibodies to T. gondii was found in 22.4% of 434 pumas (Felis concolor) and 51.7% of 58 bobcats (Lynx rufus). In the state of Durango, a prevalence of 21% against T. gondii was found in 105 cats using the modified agglutination test. In this study, cats over one year of age had a significantly higher frequency of infection than younger cats (less than six months of age).

In another study of cats in the state of Colima (west cost of Mexico), T. gondii antibodies were found in 28.8% of 80 domestic cats using an indirect ELISA-IgG. Prevalence among cats fed with homemade food was higher than in cats fed commercial pellets. In Mexico City, 37 (21.8%) of 169 cats were seropositive for anti-T. gondii IgG using an indirect ELISA. The increase in frequency was related to age. The main risk factors were female gender, feeding cats with raw meat and infrequent cleaning of the litter box.

In Northeastern Mexico, a study of T. gondii on wild cats revealed a prevalence of 69% in 26 ocelots (Leopardus pardalis).

In the state of Yucatán, Mexico, the seroprevalence of T. gondii found in domestic cats was 75.5% (166/220) of IgM antibodies and 91.8% (202/220) to IgG. From the 220 studied cats, 79% (173/220) were PCR positive. The number of cats per household and low body condition is associated with reactivation of chronic infection.

Rabbits: In domestic rabbits, an isolated study reported the prevalence of antibodies to T. gondii as 26.9% from 77 out of 286 animals from three different farms, using an ELISA test.

Dogs: In dogs, antibodies to T. gondii were found in 52 (51.5%) of 101 dogs in the state of Durango, using the modified agglutination test. Frequencies have also been reported in 61.7% of stray dogs from Oaxaca, using indirect ELISA, although this species is not considered relevant in the epidemiology of the parasite, and these animals are considered as incidental hosts.

Pigs: The transmission of T. gondii to humans has usually been attributed to the ingestion of raw or undercooked meat. Pork meat in particular is considered as one of the most common sources of infection. A study conducted on 48 samples of pork meat from butchers in the state of Jalisco, Mexico revealed that all samples studied were negative following histopathology, and were PCR negative. However, IgG and IgM
### Table 2
Seroprevalence of *Toxoplasma gondii* in animals from Mexico

| Year | State | Animal | Specie | Prevalence (%) | Test | Reference |
|------|-------|--------|--------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 2004 | State of Mexico | Chickens | *Gallus domesticus* | 6.2 | MAT | 48 |
| 2011 | Durango | Wild birds | *Toxostoma curvirostre*<br>*Anas platyrhynchos*<br>*Anas diazi*<br>*Aquila sp*<br>*Quiscalus mexicanus*<br>*Columba livia*<br>*Coturnix coturnix* | 2.6 | MAT | 20 |
| 2012 | Durango | Chickens | *Gallus domesticus*<br>Raised in backyards<br>Raised on farms | 25.5<br>4.9 | MAT | 12 |
| 2004 | Mexico | Pumas | *Felis concolor*<br>*Lynx rufus* | 16.7<br>66.6 | IHA<br>ILAT | 74 |
| 2007 | Durango | Domestic cats | *Felis silvestris catus* | 21 | MAT | 15 |
| 2007 | Colima | Domestic cats | *Felis silvestris catus* | 28.8 IgG | ELISA | 63 |
| 2008 | Mexico City | Domestic cats | *Felis silvestris catus* | 21.8 IgG | ELISA | 31 |
| 2012 | Tamaulipas | Ocelots | *Leopardus pardalis* | 69 | ILAT | 85 |
| 2012 | Yucatan | Domestic cats | *Felis silvestris catus* | 75.5 IgM<br>91.8 IgG | ELISA | 39 |
| 2006 | State of Mexico | Rabbits | *Oryctolagus cuniculus* | 26.9 IgG | ELISA | 54 |
| 2007 | Durango | Dogs | *Canis familiaris* | 51.5 | MAT | 45 |
| 2012 | Oaxaca | Stray dogs | *Canis familiaris* | 61.7 IgG | ELISA | 40 |
| 2011 | Yucatan | Pigs | *Sus scrofa* | 100 IgG | ELISA | 79 |
| 2011 | Durango | Pigs | *Sus scrofa* | 32.1 | MAT | 9 |
| 2012 | Oaxaca | Pigs | Raised in backyards<br>Raised on farms | 17.2<br>0.5 | MAT | 4 |
| 2008 | Puebla-Veracruz | Sheep | *Ovis aries* | 77-84 IgG | ELISA | 35 |
| 2008 | Colima | Sheep | *Ovis aries* | 29.1 IgG | ELISA | 34 |
| 2012 | Durango | Sheep | *Ovis aries* | 15.1 | MAT | 10 |
| 2013 | Oaxaca | Sheep | *Ovis aries* | 23.1 | MAT | 3 |
| 2011 | Durango | Goats | *Capra hircus* | 31 | MAT | 11 |
| 2013 | Michoacan | Dairy Goats | *Capra hircus* | 15.2 | MAT | 25 |
| 2012 | Durango | Horses | *Equus caballus* | 6.1 | MAT | 21 |
| 2012 | Coahuila<br>Nuevo Leon<br>Tamaulipas | Deer | *Odocoileus virginianus* | 13.9 IgG | ELISA | 78 |
| 2012 | Quintana Roo<br>Mexico City | Dolphins<br>Sea lions | *Tursiops truncatus truncatus*<br>*Tursiops truncatus gillii*<br>*Zalophus californianus* | 87.3 | MAT | 23 |
| 2005 | Mexico City | Opossums<br>Ringtail cat<br>Spotted skunks<br>Weasel<br>Rock squirrels<br>Gray squirrels<br>Feral cats<br>Feral dogs | *Didelphis virginianus*<br>*Bassariscus astutus*<br>*Spilogale gracilis*<br>*Mustela frenata*<br>*Spermophilus variegatus*<br>*Sciurus aureogaster*<br>*Felix catus*<br>*Canis familiaris* | 23.9 | CF | 92 |
| 2009 | Durango | Dogs<br>Cats<br>Opossums<br>Rats<br>Mice | *Canis familiaris*<br>*Felis catus*<br>*Didelphis virginianus*<br>*Rattus spp.*<br>*Mus musculus* | 45.3<br>9.3<br>16.6<br>0.8<br>3.1 | MAT | 50 |

**ILAT**: Latex agglutination test. **MAT**: Modified agglutination test. **IHA**: Indirect agglutination test. **CF**: Complement fixation. **ELISA**: Enzyme-Linked ImmunoSorbent Assay.
antibodies were found in one of 48 mice inoculated through an ELISA. The frequency in the pork was 2.1%, which was lower than expected but similar to that found in other regions\textsuperscript{40}.

In a cohort study conducted in 64 newly weaned pigs, from two farms with different densities of cats, on the farm with higher cat density (FA), 97.5% of 31 pigs were seroconverted in the second sampling and 100% in the third sample, while in the second farm (FB) (with lower cat density) all pigs were seroconverted in the fourth sampling, using an indirect ELISA. The true incidence rate (TIR) was 0.67 and 0.43 for FA and FB respectively, during the first four weeks at risk. The relative risk (RR) was 1.5. Animals from FA had a higher risk of infection compared to FB; however, in the end, all pigs showed antibodies against \textit{T. gondii}. These results suggested a major environmental contamination with oocysts, since the study area is located in an endemic area\textsuperscript{39}.

In another study, 136 (12.7%) of 1074 evaluated pigs from Durango State showed antibodies against \textit{T. gondii}, using the modified agglutination test. In this study, the seroprevalence varied according to the geographic regions in which they were bred; in the mountainous region a significantly higher seroprevalence (32.1%) was found compared to those raised in the valley (13.0%) and semi-desert regions (14.0%)\textsuperscript{41}. In pigs reared in backyards, the seropositivity was 37.9% from 337 evaluated animals, while only one (0.5%) of 188 pigs raised on farms showed antibodies against \textit{T. gondii}. The higher seroprevalence of \textit{T. gondii} from the backyard pigs was found in animals ≥ 9 months of age (40%), in females (40%), in pigs from the ishmus region (33.3%), and those raised in tropical climates (65%). The results confirm that the management system (outdoor vs. indoor with biosecurity) is a key factor in the epidemiology of swine toxoplasmosis\textsuperscript{39}.

\textbf{Sheep:} In a study located in Eastern Mexico, a frequency range of 77-84\% of anti-\textit{T. gondii} antibodies was found in 103 sera of sheep, using an indirect ELISA. The higher prevalence of toxoplasmosis in environments with warm and humid climates was attributed to the high viability of the \textit{T. gondii} oocysts\textsuperscript{42}. In another study conducted in the coastal, mountainous and hill regions in the state of Colima, serum samples of 351 sheep were tested using a previously standardized indirect ELISA. The frequency of IgG antibodies depended on the altitude, being higher than 1200 meters above sea level, and the size of the flock, with a higher frequency being found in the largest\textsuperscript{43}. In Northern Mexico, a \textit{T. gondii} seropositivity of 15.1\% was found in 511 animals tested using a modified agglutination test. Seroprevalence significantly increased with age, indicating transmission soon after birth\textsuperscript{40}. In Southern Mexico, a seroprevalence of 23.1\% was found in sheep, using the modified agglutination test. The seroprevalence was significantly higher in sheep reared under semi-intensive (grazing cultivated pasture and hay) conditions than those reared under semi-extensive (grazing lands with natural grass) conditions. Additionally, the seroprevalence of \textit{T. gondii} was higher in mixed breed sheep than in purebreds\textsuperscript{1}.

\textbf{Goats:} Few studies have been conducted on the seroprevalence of \textit{T. gondii} in goats. Antibody seropositivity evaluated from 562 domestic goats, using the modified agglutination test, showed a prevalence of 31\%. In this study, seroprevalence was widely distributed in the geographic region studied, and increases with age and race. Goats reared in the semi-desert (Nubian) had a significantly higher seroprevalence (32.7\%) than those raised in the mountains (18.6\%) (mixed breeds). Positivity was found in all 12 (100\%) farms sampled\textsuperscript{41}. In dairy goats, the seropositivity found was 15.2\% from 341 examined animals. An increase in seroprevalence was found in goats 13-24 and 49-86 months of age (25\% and 22.9\% respectively). Additionally, goats from warm-humid climates and at 1,700 meters above sea level had higher seroprevalence (62.1\%)\textsuperscript{23}.

\textbf{Horses:} In horses from the Northwest Mexico, seroprevalence to \textit{T. gondii} was reported in 30 (6.1\%) of 495 animals, using the modified agglutination test (MAT). Seroprevalence was higher in horses from rural areas (7.8\%) compared to those living in urban areas (0\%)\textsuperscript{31}.

\textbf{Monkeys:} Toxoplasmosis causes a fatal, multi-systemic disease in New World primates, such as impaired respiratory and multifocal necrotic lesions. Two fatal cases of acute toxoplasmosis in squirrel monkeys (\textit{Saimiri sciuereus}) were found; the main pathological findings included pulmonary edema, interstitial pneumonia, hepatitis, and necrotizing lymphadenitis. In addition, structures similar to tachyzoites of \textit{T. gondii} by histopathology in these organs were described. The diagnosis was confirmed by immunohistochemistry, transmission electron microscopy, and real time PCR. Quantification of the parasite load was < 14 and 23 parasites/mg tissue and genotyping was similar to the reference strain type \textit{I}\textsuperscript{41}.

\textbf{Deer:} In white-tailed deer from Northern Mexico, a seroprevalence of 13.9\% (74/532) was found using an ELISA test. These results were associated with management factors on farms, such as the number of deer per hectare and the geographic location\textsuperscript{39}.

\textbf{Marine mammals:} Toxoplasmosis in marine mammals is of great importance since these animals serve as sentinel organisms for the level of oocyst pollution in the seas. A study in Central and Southern Mexico was conducted on 75 marine mammals in captivity through the modified agglutination test. Antibodies to \textit{T. gondii} were found in 55 (87.3\%) of 63 Atlantic bottlenose dolphins (\textit{Tursiops truncatus truncatus}), in three Pacific bottlenose dolphins (\textit{Tursiops truncatus gilli}), in two out of four California sea lions (\textit{Zalophus californianus}), but not in three West Indian manatees (\textit{Trichechus manatus}) or two Patagonian sea lions (\textit{Otaria flavescens}). All marine animals sampled were found in healthy conditions and have had no records of cases of clinical toxoplasmosis in at least the last 15 years\textsuperscript{41}.

\textbf{Other species:} In wild mammals such as opossums (\textit{Didelphis virginiana}), ring-tailed cats (\textit{Bassariscus astutus}), spotted skunks (\textit{Spilogale gracilis}), weasels (\textit{Mustela frenata}), rock squirrels (\textit{Spermophilus variegatus}), gray squirrels (\textit{Sciurus aureogaster}), feral cats (\textit{Felis catus}), and feral dogs (\textit{Canis familiaris}), a 23.9\% seroprevalence of \textit{T. gondii} has been reported\textsuperscript{22}. Later studies conducted in the state of Durango showed antibodies to \textit{T. gondii} in 11 (16.6\%) of 66 opossums (\textit{Didelphis virginiana}), two (0.8\%) of 249 rats (\textit{Rattus} spp.), four (3.1\%) of 127 mice (\textit{Mus musculus}) and 0 (0\%) of 69 squirreals (\textit{Spermophilus variegatus}). Additionally, viable \textit{T. gondii} cysts were isolated from tissue (brain and heart) in three of 28 seropositive dogs and five of eight seropositive cats but no isolations were obtained in other animal species studied\textsuperscript{40}.

\textbf{Genotyping of Toxoplasma gondii in animals from Mexico:} Very few reports reveal predominant genotypes of \textit{T. gondii} present in animals. In 2004, \textit{T. gondii} was isolated from six chickens and all six isolates were avirulent for mice. Genotyping of chicken isolates of \textit{T. gondii} using
the SAG2 locus indicated that five were type III and one was type I[4]. In another study, viable *T. gondii* was isolated in tissues from three of 28 seropositive dogs and five of eight seropositive cats and four isolates from free-range chickens from Mexico, previously isolated. The PCR-RFLP identified five genotypes. One genotype (the four chicken isolates) belongs to the clonal Type III lineage, three genotypes were reported in previous reports, and are different from Type I, II and III lineages that predominate in North America and Europe, and one genotype is unique[39]. Two cases of lethal acute toxoplasmosis in squirrel monkeys (*Saimiri sciureus*) from Mexico City were studied, where digestion of the SAG3 gene amplicon showed similar bands to type I reference strains[40]. Recent studies found a new atypical genotype of *T. gondii* in a wild puma (*Felis concolor*) that was virulent for mice, this is the only study from wildlife in Mexico[41].

**Analysis:** The highest seroprevalence of toxoplasmosis found in human adults from the southeastern states of Mexico such as Yucatán, Tabasco and Jalisco, could be due to the climatic conditions found in those areas, characterized by their tropical climates (high temperature and humidity) which promote the survival of the parasite oocysts in the environment[38,44-49]. However, the low seroprevalence reported in some areas, like in Oaxaca State, may be related to a low density of cats and low consumption of meat in the diet of the general population[44]. Even when located in a tropical region, the humidity, temperature and presence of cats play an important role in the transmission of this parasite. The seroprevalence found in the northern regions of Mexico (i.e. Durango state) is lower than that from other regions of Mexico; the differences between the two regions could be explained by the dry climate and relatively high altitude in the region and probably the characteristics of the studied populations. Seroprevalence, particularly in breeding animals (pigs and sheep), is much higher in tropical areas, which is also related to the climatic conditions. It is noteworthy that Yucatán state is an endemic region where animals and humans are constantly exposed to the parasite due to the high contamination of the environment with infective oocysts[39].

**CONCLUSION**

Reports of *T. gondii* in Mexico indicate that this neglected disease is widely distributed in humans and domestic and wild animals throughout the country, with increased prevalences in tropical regions. A high seroprevalence is commonly found in farm animals in the tropical areas of Mexico where *T. gondii* is endemic; in these endemic areas *T. gondii* is maintained viable for a long time in the soil and water, which are critical for its transmission to animals. This agent is usually found in meat produced for human consumption, which could be a major source of infection. Fetuses of susceptible pregnant women (i.e. those having not been previously exposed to the parasite) and immunocompromised patients are at high risk of developing clinical signs associated with the agent such as abortion, malformations and fatal cases of meningoencephalitis respectively. Efforts in the field of education should be oriented towards the importance of hygiene when handling and preparing food. It is vital to implement control and surveillance programs for the prevention and control of toxoplasmosis in Mexico at the farm level for meat production, reducing the environmental oocyst load and maintaining a low incidence of positive cases in animal production species for meat consumption and, consequently, reducing the spread to the human population.

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Received: 24 April 2013
Accepted: 16 July 2014