



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***SEROPREVALENCE OF MELIOIDOSIS IN ANIMALS AND
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING PRESENCE OF
BURKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI IN SMALL RUMINANT FARMS IN
PENINSULAR MALAYSIA***

HASSAN ISMAIL MUSA

FPV 2014 27



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By

HASSAN ISMAIL MUSA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in the Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2014

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, Mallam Musa Sambo and Amina Adamu both of whom returned to their Creator and Lord (Allah SWT) during the period of this study.



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Abstract of the thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

SEROPREVALENCE OF MELIOIDOSIS IN ANIMALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING PRESENCE OF *BURKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI* IN SMALL RUMINANT FARMS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

By

HASSAN ISMAIL MUSA

December 2014

Chairman: Latiffah Hassan, DVM, PhD

Faculty: Veterinary Medicine

Melioidosis results in chronic debilities that reduce productivity and causes condemnation of carcasses of affected animals. There have been anecdotal reports of increase in the disease in animals in Malaysia in recent times. However, there are limited scientific information on the distribution and risk factors of the disease in animal populations as well as the factors in the environments of endemic areas that influence presence of the disease agent. A study was carried out to determine the distribution, risk factors and environmental factors that may influence the presence of the disease agent in small ruminant farms in Peninsular Malaysia. Dataset on the continuous surveillance of melioidosis in animals and another on rainfall and wind speed were both obtained for a period of 10 years. The data were summarized according to animal species, state, year and month of occurrence and relationships between disease prevalence and rainfall and wind speed were examined. The overall seroprevalence between the year 2000 and 2009 was 6.20% (95% CI; 6.02-6.37). The seroprevalence according to animal species showed that buffalo had the highest prevalence (28.18%, 95% CI; 19.04-39.54), followed by sheep (16.55%, 95% CI; 16.03 – 17.09), cattle (7.42%, 95% CI; 5.61-9.75), deer (6.45%, 95% CI; 4.50-9.17), pigs (5.88%, 95% CI; 1.05–26.98), rabbits (3.90%, 95% CI 2.90-4.90) and goats (2.19%, 95% CI; % 2.06-2.37). In terms of year of the study, the prevalence varied from 3.14% (95% CI; 2.84-3.46) in 2008 to 11.79% (95%CI; 10.6-13.09) in 2003. The prevalence for the year 2004 (7.46%, 95% CI; 6.73-8.26) was observed to be significantly higher while those for the years 2008 (3.14%, 95% CI; 2.84-3.46) and 2009 (3.64%, 95% CI; 3.27-4.04) were significantly lower when compared to the prevalence for the year 2000 (6.11%, 95% CI; 5.24-7.11). Correlation analysis showed a moderate, positive and statistically significant correlation between melioidosis prevalence and rainfall ($r = 0.58$, 95% CI; 0.12-0.87, $p = 0.047$) during the period under review. The apparently low seroprevalence among pigs (5.88%) and goats (2.19%) may partly be due to intensive farm management systems in which animals had less contact with contaminated soil and water while the relatively high seroprevalence in buffaloes may partly be due to the extensive management system

in which animals are at higher risk of exposure to the disease agent. The higher prevalence in 2000-2004 may be due to increased importations of animals and unfavorable weather conditions during this period. The study however observed that serosurveillance and data recording were not carried out consistently across states, year and animal or livestock species.

To investigate the farm level risk factors of melioidosis seropositivity, questionnaires were administered to the identified melioidosis negative and positive farms from four selected states (Pahang, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor). The characteristics and putative exposure to risk factors were compared between case and the control farms using Chi-square test and logistic regression analysis. In the logistic regression model, melioidosis-positive farms were significantly more likely to have; had bush clearing around farms (odds ratio [OR]; 6.61, 95% confidence interval [CI]; 1.12-38.84, $p < 0.037$), *B. pseudomallei* present in the farm soil (OR; 6.23, 95% CI; 1.03-37.68, $p < 0.046$), other species raised on farm (OR; 7.96, 95% CI; 1.14-55.99, $p < 0.037$) and flooding or waterlogging condition (OR; 11.95, 95% CI; 1.39-102.6, $p = 0.024$) compared to negative farms. Farms that treated the soil with lime (OR; 0.028, 95% CI; 0.003-0.29, $p = 0.003$) were protected from the infection. Bush clearing may increase the risk of exposure to *B. pseudomallei* because it involves dispersal of large amount of dust into the atmosphere, brings up agents located at lower levels to the surface thereby increasing the risk of infection. Flood and or waterlogging and presence of agent in farm soil may increase the risk of contact between agent in soil and water with resident animals in the farm.

To investigate the physicochemical properties of soil and water that may influence occurrence of the agent in the farm environment, soil and water samples collected from small ruminant farms in the four states and cultured for *B. pseudomallei*. For the soil properties, comparisons of the *B. pseudomallei*-positive and negative soil samples using logistic regression model found that, when compared with *B. pseudomallei* negative soil samples, a positive sample was found to be significantly ($p < 0.05$) more likely to have higher iron contents (OR; 1.009, 95% CI; 1.001-1.018, $p = 0.034$), higher water contents (OR; 1.28, 95% CI; 1.052-1.546, $p = 0.013$) and higher clay contents (OR; 1.54, 95% CI; 1.153-2.062, $p = 0.004$). The significantly higher iron, water and clay contents of the *B. pseudomallei*-positive soil is consistent with the understanding that iron regulates expression of respiratory enzymes, soil water is essential for soil ecology and agent's biological processes and clay has excellent water and nutrient retention capabilities due to its surface area and chemical activity which favor survival of the agent in soil.

Investigation of the water properties found that, when compared with *B. pseudomallei* negative water samples, positive water samples were found to be significantly ($p < 0.05$) more likely to have higher chemical oxygen demand (COD) (OR; 1.002, 95% CI; 1.000-1.004, $p = 0.031$) and higher pH value (OR; 12.69, 95% CI; 2.67-60.34, $p = 0.001$). This suggested that higher COD and higher water pH supported the survival of the agent in water samples.

In conclusion, melioidosis is widely distributed in Peninsular Malaysia and affects all livestock species regardless of the size, species, population size and breed. The disease occurrence was associated with several factors such as events/activities around farm such bush clearing, water logging/flooding and presence of other

species of animal in the farm. The farm soil iron, water and clay content as well chemical oxygen demand and pH of farm water supplies were the factors that influence the presence of *B. pseudomallei* in farm environments. This information may be of benefits when planning for control strategies against exposure to *B. pseudomallei* from soil or water source.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

SEROPREVALENS MELIOIDOSIS DALAM HAIWAN DAN FAKTOR PERSEKITARAN YANG MEMPENGARUHI KEHADIRAN *BULKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI* DI LADANG RUMINAN KECIL DI SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA

Oleh

HASSAN ISMAIL MUSA

Disember 2014

Pengerusi: Latiffah Hassan, DVM, PhD

Fakulti: Perubatan Veterinar

Melioidosis menyebabkan ketidakupayaan kronik yang mengurangkan produktiviti dan penolakan karkas haiwan. Terdapat laporan anekdot tentang peningkatan dalam penyakit ini pada haiwan di Malaysia sejak kebelakangan ini. Walau bagaimanapun, maklumat saintifik adalah terhad mengenai taburan dan faktor risiko penyakit dalam populasi haiwan dan juga faktor persekitaran di kawasan endemik yang mempengaruhi kewujudan organisma. Satu kajian telah dijalankan untuk menentukan taburan, faktor risiko dan faktor persekitaran yang mempengaruhi kehadiran agen penyakit ini di ladang ruminan kecil di Semenanjung Malaysia. Set data dari pengawasan dan pemantauan berterusan melioidosis pada haiwan dan data meteorologi hujan dan kelajuan angin diperolehi bagi tempoh 10 tahun. Data diringkaskan mengikut spesis haiwan, negeri, tahun dan bulan dan hubungan antara kelaziman penyakit, hujan dan kelajuan angin diperiksa. Seroprevalens keseluruhan antara tahun 2000 dan 2009 adalah 6.20% (95% CI; 6.02-6.37). Seroprevalens mengikut spesis haiwan menunjukkan bahawa kerbau mempunyai kadar reaktor tertinggi (28.18%, 95% CI; 19.04-39.54), diikuti dengan kambing biri-biri (16.55%, 95% CI; 16.03-17.09), lembu (7.42%, 95% CI; 5.61-9.75), rusa (6.45%, 95% CI; 4.50-9.17), babi (5.88%, 95% CI; 1.05-26.98), arnab (3.90%, 95% CI; 2.90-4.90) dan kambing (2.19%, 95% CI; 2.06-2.37). Dari segi tahun kajian, kelaziman yang berbeza dari 3.14% (95% CI; 2.84-3.46) pada tahun 2008 ke 11.79% (95% CI; 10.6-13.09) pada tahun 2003. Berbanding dengan kelaziman bagi tahun 2000 (6.11 %, 95% CI; 5.24-7.11), kadar yang lebih tinggi (7.46%, 95% CI; 6.73-8.26) diperhatikan pada tahun 2004 manakala kadar jauh lebih rendah dilihat pada tahun 2008 (3.14%, 95% CI; 2.84-3.46) dan 2009 (3.64%, 95% CI; 3.27-4.04). Analisis korelasi menunjukkan korelasi yang sederhana, positif dan bekeertian statistik antara kelaziman melioidosis dan hujan ($r = 0.58$, 95% CI; 0.12-0.87, $p = 0.047$). Seroprevalens yang rendah kalangan di babi dan kambing berkemungkinan disebabkan oleh sistem pengurusan ladang intensif dimana haiwan mempunyai pendedahan kurang kepada tanah dan air yang tercemar manakala seroprevalens yang agak tinggi pada kerbau mungkin disebabkan oleh sistem pengurusan yang

ekstensif dimana haiwan berisiko lebih tinggi terdedah kepada agen penyakit. Kadar yang lebih tinggi dalam 2000-2004 disebabkan pengimportan haiwan dan keadaan cuaca yang buruk dalam tempoh ini. Kajian ini bagaimanapun mendapati bahawa pengawasan dan pengumpulan data tidak dilakukan secara sama rata di antara negeri, tahun dan haiwan atau spesies ternakan.

Untuk menyasat faktor risiko melioidosis di ladang, borang soal selidik telah diberikan kepada ladang yang melioidosis negatif dan positif dari negeri terpilih (Pahang, Perak, Negeri Sembilan dan Selangor). Ciri dan faktor risiko penyakit dibandingkan antara ladang kes dan ladang kawalan menggunakan ujian *chi-square* dan regresi logistik. Dalam model regresi logistik, ladang melioidosis positif nyata lebih cenderung; melakukan pembersihan belukar sekitar ladang (nisbah mungkin (OR);6.61, 95% selang keyakinan [CI]; 1.12-38.84, $p < 0.037$), wujud *B. pseudomallei* pada tanah ladang (OR; 6.23, 95% CI; 1.03- 37.68, $p < 0.046$), membela spesies lain di ladang (OR;7.96, 95% CI; 1.14-55.99, $p < 0.037$) dan telah berlaku banjir atau genang air (OR;11.95, 95% CI;1.39-102.6, $p = 0.024$) berbanding ladang negatif. Ladang yang tanah dirawat dengan kapur (OR; 0.028, 95% CI;0.003-0.29, $p = 0.003$) telah dilindungi dari jangkitan. Pembersihan belukar boleh meningkatkan risiko pendedahan kepada *B. pseudomallei* kerana ia menyebabkan penyebaran jumlah besar debu ke udara, dimana agen dari bawah tanah dibawa ke permukaan atas justeru meningkatkan risiko transmisi. Banjir atau genang air di tanah ladang juga akan meningkatkan risiko pendedahan antara agen di dalam tanah dan air kepada haiwan bermastautin di ladang.

Untuk menyasat ciri fisikokimia tanah dan air yang boleh mempengaruhi kehadiran agen itu dalam persekitaran ladang, sampel tanah dan sampel air di ladang ruminan kecil telah diambil dan dikultur untuk *B. pseudomallei*. Perbandingan sampel tanah *B. pseudomallei* positif dan negatif menggunakan model regresi logistik mendapati bahawa, berbanding dengan *B. pseudomallei* sampel tanah yang negatif, sampel yang positif didapati bekeertian ($p < 0.05$) lebih cenderung untuk mempunyai kandungan besi yang lebih tinggi (OR;1.009, 95% CI;1.001-1.018, $p = 0.034$), kandungan air yang lebih tinggi (OR;1.28, 95% CI; 1.052-1.546, $p = 0.013$) dan kandungan tanah liat yang lebih tinggi (OR;1.54, 95% CI;1.153-2.062, $p = 0.004$). Besi, kandungan tanah liat dan air jauh lebih tinggi pada tanah *B. pseudomallei* positif adalah konsisten dengan pemahaman yang besi mengawal ekspresi enzim pernafasan, air tanah adalah penting untuk ekologi tanah dan proses biologi agen dan tanah liat berkebolehan menampung air dan mengekal nutrien kerana kawasan permukaannya dan aktiviti kimia yang memihak kepada kemandirian agen itu di dalam tanah.

Penyasatan sifat air mendapati bahawa, berbanding dengan *B. pseudomallei* sampel air negatif, sampel air yang positif bekeertian ($p < 0.05$) lebih cenderung mempunyai permintaan oksigen kimia yang lebih tinggi (COD) (OR;1.002, 95% CI;1.000-1.004, $p = 0.031$) dan nilai pH yang lebih tinggi (OR;12.69, 95% CI; 2.67-60.34, $p = 0.001$). Ini mencadangkan bahawa COD yang lebih tinggi dan pH air yang lebih tinggi menyokong kemandirian agen itu dalam air.

Kesimpulannya, melioidosis tersebar secara meluas di Semenanjung Malaysia dan memberi kesan kepada semua spesies ternakan tanpa mengira saiz, saiz populasi, spesies dan baka. Berlakunya penyakit dikaitkan dengan beberapa faktor seperti berlakunya aktiviti di sekitar ladang seperti pembersihan belukar, genang air/banjir

dan kehadiran spesies haiwan lain di ladang. Kandungan besi, air, tanah liat, permintaan oksigen kimia dan pH bekalan air ladang merupakan faktor yang mempengaruhi kehadiran *B. pseudomallei* dalam persekitaran ladang. Maklumat dari kajian ini mungkin bermanfaat apabila merancang strategi kawalan pendedahan kepada *B. pseudomallei* dari tanah atau sumber air.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 9 December 2014 to conduct the final examination of Hassan Ismail Musa on his thesis entitled "Seroprevalence of Melioidosis in Animals and Environmental Factors Influencing Presence of *Burkholderia pseudomallei* in Small Ruminant Farms in Peninsular Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Mohd Zamri b Saad, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia
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Associate Professor
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
Universiti Putra Malaysia
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Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Ian Robertson, PhD

Professor
School of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences
Murdoch University
(External Examiner)



ZULKARNAIN ZAINAL, PhD
Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 26 February 2015

This thesis was submitted to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

Latiffah Hassan, PhD

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Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia
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Zunita Zakaria, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Saleha Abdul Aziz, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Zulkifli Hj. Shamsuddin, PhD

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Faculty of Agriculture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Chandrawathani Panchadcharam, PhD

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer
Arc GIS	Geographic information system (GIS) software
ASA	Ashdown's Selective agar
bp	base pairs
ASB	Ashdown's Selective Enrichment Broth
BHI	Brain heart infusion
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEC	Cation Exchange Capacity
CFSPH	Center for Food Security and Public Health
CFT	Complement Fixation Test
CI	Confidence Interval
COD	Chemical oxygen demand
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTP	Deoxyribonucleotide triphosphate
DO ₂	Dissolved oxygen
DOC	Deoxycholate
DSM	Department of Statistics Malaysia
DVS	Department of Veterinary Services
ELISA	Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural organization of united nation
FeSOD	Iron superoxide dismutase
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographical Information System
HMA	Hydroxymyristic acid
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
IFAT	Indirect immunofluorescent Technique
IgM	Immunoglobulin M
JHSPH	Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
JUPEM	Department of Survey and Mapping

LOI	Loss on Ignition
LPS	Lipopolysaccharide
MMD	Malaysian Meteorology Department
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Malaysia
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
NAP-A	Norfloxacin, ampicillin and polymyxin B into Ashdown medium
OD	Optical density
OIE	International Organization for Animal Health
OR	Odds ratio
PEG	polyethylene glycol
PHB	Polyhydroxybutyrate
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PFGE	Pulsed field gel electrophoresis
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RM	Malaysian Ringgit
ROI	Reactive oxygen intermediate
rRNA	Ribosomal ribonucleic acid
SDO	Short-chain dehydrogenase/oxidoreductase
SNP	Single nucleotide polymorphism
SOM	Soil Organic Matter
T3SS	Type III secretion systems
T6SS	Type VI secretion systems
TBSS	Threonine basal salt solution
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
VNBC	Viable but non culturable
VRI	Veterinary Research Institute
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Melioidosis (Whitmore's disease, pseudoglanders) is an infectious disease caused by a bacterium, *Burkholderia pseudomallei* (*B. pseudomallei*). The name "melioidosis" is derived from the Greek words "melis" (distemper of asses) and "eidosis" (resembles glanders), which simply means "glanders-like illness" or "distemper of the asses" (Raja *et al.*, 2005, Stanton & Fletcher, 1932). The disease was first described by Alfred Whitmore and Krishnaswami in Burma (Myanmar) in 1912 (Whitmore & Krishnaswami, 1912) but being a predominantly tropical disease (Limmathurotsakul & Peacock, 2011), it attracted little attention from the global community until the Vietnam wars when French and US personnel and military dogs were affected (Acha & Szyfres, 2001). In addition, the recognition of the disease as an emerging global problem (Dance, 2000b, Acha & Szyfres, 2001) and the classification of *B. pseudomallei* as category B bioterrorism agent (Meselson *et al.*, 2002) have both resulted in increased interest in the diseases. However, the fact that eradication of the disease is difficult with slow response to antibiotic treatments, the high chances of relapse of cases as well as the prolonged period between infection and manifestation of disease may affect control strategies against the disease (Currie *et al.*, 2000a).

The disease is endemic in Southeast Asia and northern Australia but has been reported in almost all continents of the world (Currie *et al.*, 2008) in places which including Britain, Europe (Dance *et al.*, 1992), Brazil, South America (Miralles *et al.*, 2004), South Africa (Van der Lugt & Henton, 1995) and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East (Barbour *et al.*, 1997) among others. The clinical course and presentation of the disease varies in different species of animals where the outcome of infection varies from mild to severe illness, including death (Inglis & Sousa, 2009, Sprague & Neubauer, 2004). The disease is considered to be an emerging infectious disease in both humans and animals partly due to the increased global animal and fomite transportation as well as the increase in its recognition as a result of increased awareness, better laboratory facilities and increasing incidence (Dance, 2000b). The continuous migration of people and transport of animals around the world as well the global increase in tourism were thought to increase the risk of spread of melioidosis worldwide (Sprague & Neubauer, 2004). Over the last few years, the disease was reported to have emerged as a major public health problem in the endemic regions (Inglis & Sousa, 2009).

Soil and water constitute the two major reservoirs of *B. pseudomallei* in the environment and understanding the dynamics of these environmental reservoirs is important in planning control measures against the disease. However, the physicochemical properties of these reservoirs that may influence presence of *B. pseudomallei* in soil and water from the environments of the endemic regions are poorly understood (Rattanavong *et al.*, 2011, Dance, 2000a). Studies on survivability of *B. pseudomallei* in these reservoirs showed a complex relationship between the organism and environmental factors such as soil types, farming activities, environmental disturbance and water parameters among other factors (Palasatien *et*

al., 2008, Currie *et al.*, 2008, Inglis & Sagripanti, 2006). In general, changes in environmental factors and farming practices, increased in numbers susceptible hosts resulting from better management of chronic diseases were said to be some of the reasons responsible for the expansion in melioidosis endemic areas and environmental presence of its agent (Currie *et al.*, 2008, Raja *et al.*, 2005, Dance, 2000a). Furthermore, increased incidence of occurrence of the agent in soil has been shown to be associated with increased incidence of melioidosis cases in the same area (Palasatien *et al.*, 2008). In essence, since melioidosis is mostly considered to be an environmental disease, climate and biogeochemical functions of *B. pseudomallei* in its normal inanimate habitats might be an important factor in the geographical distribution of the disease (Inglis *et al.*, 2001). Consequently, soil types, its pH and composition, environmental disturbances (excavation, ploughing etc), rainfall, humidity, UV radiation, temperature, other vegetation, and the use of fertilizers are some of the factors suggested to influence the environmental presence of the agent (Cheng & Currie, 2005).

In Malaysia, first documented cases of the disease was described in 1913 by Stanton and Fletcher (1932) and since then cases have continued to be reported in both humans and animals from both the Peninsular and East Malaysia (Puthuchery, 2009, Little, 1979, Strauss *et al.*, 1969a). Even though the disease is endemic in Malaysia, anecdotal reports in recent times showed an increase in cases of the disease in animals. In addition, the sustained advocacies and calls for the inclusion of the disease on the list of notifiable diseases in Malaysia due to its threat to public health (Kamaruddin, 2013, Jayaram, 2005) also underscores the increasing levels of importance of the disease in human population in the country. However, information on the epidemiology of the disease in local animals and the factors contributing to the occurrence of its agent in the environment is scanty. This is in view of the fact that melioidosis in small ruminants result in chronic debilitating disease that causes reduced productivity of the animals and condemnation of carcasses in the abattoir (Choy *et al.*, 2000, Ketterer *et al.*, 1986). This study aimed at improving the understanding of melioidosis in animals in Peninsular Malaysia through investigation of its distribution in animal populations and factors influencing presence of *B. pseudomallei* in water and soil samples from animal farm environments.

The research set out to answer the following questions:

What is the seroprevalence of melioidosis among livestock in Malaysia between the year 2000 and 2009?

What are the factors or farm practices that may play significant roles in seropositivity of small ruminants against melioidosis test in Peninsular Malaysia?

Is there any relationship between occurrence of melioidosis cases in animals and the amount of rainfall recorded during the period of the study?

What are the physicochemical properties of soil that could influence the presence of *B. pseudomallei* in soil from small ruminants' farms in Peninsular Malaysia?

What are the physicochemical properties of water that could influence the presence of *B. pseudomallei* in water from small ruminant farms in Peninsular Malaysia?

The three major hypotheses of the research were:

1. Occurrence of melioidosis in animals during the last decade is related to the intensity and variations of rainfall and wind speed recorded during the period of the study.
2. There is a difference in isolation rates of *Burkholderia pseudomallei* between small ruminant farms with seropositive and those with seronegative animals.
3. Some physicochemical properties of soil and water influence presence of *B. pseudomallei* in soil and water in small ruminant farm environment in Peninsular Malaysia.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the seroprevalence of melioidosis in Peninsular Malaysian animal population between the year 2000 and 2009 as well as to examine the relationships between melioidosis seroprevalence in animals and the amount of rainfall and wind speed recorded during the period under review.
2. To determine factors (risks) in small ruminant farms that may influence serological status of animals against *Burkholderia pseudomallei* in Peninsular Malaysia.
3. To examine the physicochemical properties of soil that may influence the presence of *B. pseudomallei* in soil from small ruminant farms from Peninsular Malaysia.
4. To examine the physicochemical properties of water that may influence presence of *B. pseudomallei* in water from small ruminant farms from Peninsular Malaysia.

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