



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***SEROPREVALENCE OF LEPTOSPIROSIS AND BRUCELLOSIS IN
LONG-TAILED MACAQUES (*MACACA FASCICULARIS*)
OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA***

YONG SUIT-B, CHYNA

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**SEROPREVALENCE OF LEPTOSPIROSIS AND BRUCELLOSIS IN
LONG-TAILED MACAQUES (*MACACA FASCICULARIS*)
OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA**

YONG SUIT-B, CHYNA

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DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

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It is hereby certified that I/we* have read this project paper entitled “Seroprevalence of Leptospirosis and Brucellosis in Long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) of Peninsular Malaysia’, by Yong Suit-B, Chyna and in my/our* opinion it is satisfactory in terms of scope, quality, and presentation as partial fulfilment of the requirement for the course VPD 4901 – Final Year Project.

ASSOC. PROF. DR. LATIFFAH HASSAN

DVM (UPM), PHD (CORNELL)

Head of Department,

Department of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnostics

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Supervisor)

ASSOC. PROF. DR. SITI KHAIRANI BEJO

DVM (UPM), MSC (UPM), PHD (UPM)

Department of Veterinary Pathology & Microbiology,

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Co-Supervisor)

DR. RUEBEN SUNIL KUMAR SHARMA

DVM (UPM), MVSC (UPM), PHD (CAMBRIDGE)

Senior Lecturer,

Department of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnostics,

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Co-Supervisor)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to

My mother who has been a constant support and encouragement for everything I choose to pursue. Her unconditional love and dedication is irreplaceable and she is an inspiration for me to always do my best. She is precious and I am grateful to have a superwoman like her every day of my life.

My four-legged best friend, Twinkle, who has been a treasured companion for the past 15 years. No words can describe how she continues to inspire me to carry on with this veterinary course. I will always remember the silent intimate moments we share, how she makes me smile through challenging times and cherish all the time she has left in this world.

Nature and her beautiful residents.

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ABSTRAK

Abstrak daripada kertas projek yang dikemukakan kepada Fakulti Perubatan Veterinar untuk memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan kursus VPD 4901 – Projek Ilmiah Tahun Akhir.

**SEROPREVALENSLEPTOSPIROSIS DAN BRUCELLOSIS PADA
KERA KETAM (*MACACA FASCICULARIS*)****DI SEMENANJUNG MALAYSIA**

Oleh

Suit-B, Y**2017****Penyelia: Prof Madya Dr. Latiffah Hassan**

Penyakit *leptospirosis* dan *brucellosis* adalah penyakit zoonotik yang penting di seluruh dunia dengan insiden yang tinggi di negara tropika yang menjejaskan biodiversiti, kesihatan manusia dan haiwan, kebajikan haiwan dan ekonomi (OIE, 2014; WHO, 2011). Populasi manusia yang semakin berkembang dan pempadatan yang pesat telah menyebabkan peningkatan interaksi hidupan liar dan manusia. Di Malaysia, penambahan konflik antara manusia dan kera (Hambali, 2012) meningkatkan risiko jangkitan penyakit. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan seroprevalens *leptospirosis* dan *brucellosis* pada kera ketam Semenanjung Malaysia. Seratus sampel serum telah diuji untuk antibodi terhadap *leptospirosis* dan *brucellosis* dengan menggunakan Microscopic Agglutination Test (MAT) dan Rose Bengal Plate Test (RBPT) masing-masing. Empat belas peratus (14/100) didapati positif untuk *leptospirosis*. Serovar yang paling

lazim dikenali adalah *Cellodoni* (4%) dan *Pyrogenes* (4%), diikuti *Icterohaemorrhagiae* (3%), *Bataviae* (2%) dan *Lai* (1%). Seroprevalens *leptospirosis* pada kera jantan adalah lebih tinggi dibandingkan kera betina. Kera jantan adalah 4.5 kali lebih mungkin seropositif dibandingkan dengan kera betina. Ini mencadangkan bahawa perbezaan tingkah laku jantina mempengaruhi pendedahan kepada *leptospirosis*. Tiada perbezaan didapati antara seroprevalens dengan umur, habitat dan kawasan. Semua sampel adalah seronegatif terhadap *brucellosis*. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kera ketam terjangkit *leptospirosis* menimbulkan risiko kesihatan awam kerana boleh berlakunya penyebaran silang spesis.

Kata Kunci: *Leptospirosis*, *Brucellosis*, *Microscopic agglutination test (MAT)*, *Rose Bengal Plate test (RBPT)*, *Zoonotik*, *Kera ketam (Macaca fascicularis)*, *Primata*, *Semenanjung Malaysia*

ABSTRACT

An abstract of the project paper presented to the Faculty of Veterinary medicine in partial fulfilment of the course VPD 4901– Final Year Project.

**SEROPREVALENCE OF LEPTOSPIROSIS AND BRUCELLOSIS IN
LONG-TAILED MACAQUES (*MACACA FASCICULARIS*)
OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA**

by

Suit-B, Y

2017

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Latiffah Hassan

Leptospirosis and brucellosis are important zoonotic diseases worldwide with high incidence in tropical countries affecting biodiversity, human and livestock health, animal welfare and the economy (OIE, 2014; WHO, 2011). The expanding human population along with rapid urbanization have increased the likelihood of wildlife and human interaction. In Malaysia, the increased human-macaque conflicts (Hambali, 2012) have resulted in the concern about zoonotic disease transmission. This study was conducted to determine the seroprevalence of leptospirosis and brucellosis in wild long-tailed macaques of Peninsular Malaysia. A hundred serum samples were screened for antibodies against *Leptospira* and *Brucella* using microscopic agglutination test (MAT) and Rose Bengal Plate test (RBPT) respectively. Fourteen percent of macaques were seropositive for leptospirosis with serovar Cellodoni (4%), and Pyrogenes (4%) as the most common serovar identified, followed by Icterohaemorrhagiae (3%), Bataviae (2%)

and Lai(1%). The prevalence in males were significantly higher than females. Males were 4.5 times more likely to be seropositive for leptospirosis compared to females. This suggests that sex differences in behaviour influences exposure of macaques to leptospirosis. There were no significant difference in seroprevalence with age, habitat and region. All samples were seronegative for brucellosis. This study concludes that leptospirosis are prevalent in long-tailed macaques and poses a public health risk of cross-species transmission.

Keywords: *Leptospirosis, Brucellosis, Microscopic agglutination test (MAT), Rose Bengal Plate test (RBPT), Zoonosis, Long-tailed macaques (Macaca fascicularis), Non-human primate, Peninsular Malaysia*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Zoonotic diseases are defined as diseases and infections which are naturally transmitted between vertebrate animals and man (WHO, 2017). The trend on wildlife emerging infectious diseases have been associated to the increase population density, encroachment into wildlife habitat, mismanagement of captive wildlife, change in agriculture practices, climate change, wildlife and exotic pet trade and ecotourism (Daszak et al., 2000; Guerra, 2013). Leptospirosis is an important worldwide zoonotic disease with high incidence in tropical countries, while brucellosis is a 'neglected zoonotic disease' (Thayaparan 2013; OIE 2014). Both diseases affects biodiversity, human and livestock health, animal welfare and economy (WHO 2011).

Leptospirosis is an endemic disease first reported in Malaysia in 1920 (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2011) and has been recognized as a re-emerging public health problem in Malaysia (Arief, 2013). Factors for re-emergence are related to conditions favourable for maintenance and transmission of leptospirosis such as favourable reservoir and carrier hosts, flooding, animal-human interface and human host factors (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2011). A seroprevalence study in Sarawak wildlife found 80% primates, 44% bats, 100% squirrels and 100% mongoose reacted positively to one or more serovars of *Leptospira sp.* (Thayaparan, 2013). Thayaparam (2013) emphasized on the importance of surveying wildlife species which lives at periphery of forests with potential to interact with humans, such as wild rats, carnivores and bats, but did not include non-human primates. Several seroprevalence studies conducted over the years revealed that non-human primates are susceptible to experimental leptospirosis and naturally acquired leptospirosis (Ibanez-Contreras et al 2010; Szonyi B 2011; Desvars

2013) and are clinically asymptomatic (Astudillo et al. 2012). Although, not much is known on leptospirosis transmission between humans and non-human primates, non-human primates should be considered as a possible asymptomatic carrier (Szonyi, 2011).

Brucellosis is the most common zoonotic infection worldwide, but is particularly neglected in Asia, leading to the emergence of this disease (Pappas et al., 2006). This disease is endemic in Malaysia (Bamaiyi et al., 2014) and high number of cases have been reported among cattle populations under the integration-plantation system (Palanisamy et al., 1999). Livestock and wildlife interaction are drivers for disease transmission. Anka et al (2014) suggested that presence of wildlife and non-cattle species on same farm are significant to bovine brucellosis in Malaysia. Prevalence studies on animal brucellosis in Malaysia has been done on goats, cattle, buffaloes and dogs (Bamaiyi et al., 2014). The epidemiology and ecology of wildlife brucellosis is still poorly understood (Godfroid et al. 2013). Multiple studies have found that non-human primates are good models to study human brucellosis (Henning, 2011; Yingst, 2010). A novel *Brucella* sp. was isolated in wild caught baboons (Schlabritz-Loutsevitch et al, 2009), but no studies have been performed locally on seroprevalence of brucellosis in non-human primates.

The long-tailed macaques has dominated the human-wildlifeconflict complaints received by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks in Malaysia (Saaban et al., 2016). The increase in human-macaque conflicts in Malaysia driven by loss of habitat and food sources, supported by subsequent adaptation to urbanized human environments result in higher interactions of humans and macaques (Hambali, 2012). Other contact

opportunities such as feeding in public recreational areas, capture of wild macaques for the pet trade or biomedical research colonies, consumption, or population management by wildlife authorities also increases human-macaque contact, thus increasing direct and indirect exposure to macaque body fluids (Lee et al., 2015). It is important to screen for particular species that lives at the periphery of forests and have the potential to interact with humans (Thayaparan et al., 2013), especially when wildlife serves as sinks for human pathogen (Muehlenbein, 2013).

No recent studies have been done to investigate seroprevalence of leptospirosis and brucellosis in primates of Peninsular Malaysia. The increase human-macaque conflicts and interactions in Malaysia which poses public health risk enhance the need to understanding prevalence of zoonotic diseases in the macaques.

This study was conducted to investigate the following objectives:-

1. To determine seroprevalence of leptospirosis and brucellosis in long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) of Peninsular Malaysia.
2. To investigate the association between seroprevalence of the two diseases to risk factors such as age, sex, habitat and region of long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*).

The hypotheses of this study are:-

1. H_0 : Long-tailed macaques of Peninsular Malaysia are seronegative for leptospirosis and/or brucellosis.
2. H_a : Long-tailed macaques of Peninsular Malaysia are seropositive for leptospirosis and/or brucellosis.

In this study, prevalence and risk factors for leptospirosis and brucellosis in long-tailed macaques are described using sera samples from human-macaque conflict cases reported in Peninsular Malaysia from 2015 to 2016. This study provides useful pilot information on the prevalence of these important zoonotic diseases in the macaques for more well designed studies in the future. The association between prevalence of disease and risk factors also gives us an insight on the possible effects of social structure and demography on disease persistence in primates.

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