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## INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AGAINST CYSTIC ECHINOCOCCOSIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA: FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

Rinaldi L.\*<sup>[1,2]</sup>, Bosco A.<sup>[1,2]</sup>, Pepe P.<sup>[1]</sup>, Nocerino M.<sup>[1]</sup>, Ciccone E.<sup>[1]</sup>, Lattero N.<sup>[1,2]</sup>, Maurelli M.P.<sup>[1]</sup>, Boué F.<sup>[3]</sup>, Umhang G.<sup>[3]</sup>, Said Y.<sup>[4]</sup>, Sotiraki S.<sup>[5]</sup>, Laatamna A.<sup>[6]</sup>, D'Orilia F.A.<sup>[2]</sup>, Cringoli G.<sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup>Department of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Production, University of Naples Federico II, Naples, Italy; <sup>[2]</sup>Centro di Riferimento Regionale Sanità Animale (CRESAN), Regione Campania; <sup>[3]</sup>ANSES, Annecy, France; <sup>[4]</sup>Universite De La Manouba, Sidi Thabet, Tunisia, <sup>[5]</sup>Veterinary Research Institute, Hellenic Agricultural Organisation Elgo-Dimitra, Thessaloniki, Greece; <sup>[6]</sup>Ziane Achour University of Djelfa, Algeria

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Cystic echinococcosis (CE), caused by the larval stage of *Echinococcus granulosus*, is a public health priority due to its worldwide distribution and its impact on human and animal health. CE is on the list of the 20 neglected tropical diseases for which control measures are recommended by the World Health Organization (Casulli et al., 2023. *Lancet Infect Dis*, 23:e95-e1072). Control programmes against *E. granulosus* are considered long-term public health measures that require an integrated approach, involving various animal and human interventions in the areas of surveillance. Over the years, actions to control CE in the Mediterranean areas have been implemented in various countries, including southern Italy, to reduce the infection rate of the parasite in definitive and intermediate hosts (Cringoli et al., 2021. *Vet Parasitol*, 290:109347; Ciccone et al., 2024. *Parasitology*, 151:421-428). In recent decades, intervention strategies against CE have also been implemented in the Campania region of southern Italy to translate scientific studies and innovative research into policy measures in the veterinary sector. These include education of farmers and citizens, diagnosis in ruminants and dogs (e.g. ultrasound techniques, Mini-FLOTAC technique, organ inspection at slaughterhouses and microsatellite analysis with FTA cards), surveillance (with geographic information systems, GPS data loggers, camera traps) and control measures (EG95 vaccine, baits laced with praziquantel and drones to treat stray canids). Since 2022, the control of *E. granulosus* in animals in Campania has been officially included as a mandatory task in the annual regional planning document (DPAT) of the veterinary services (AASSLL). In the last two years, thanks to this task (*procedura documentata*, CRESAN), control measures have been carried out on over 200 farms whose animals (sheep, cattle and buffaloes) had tested positive for CE in the slaughterhouses. Over 300 dogs were treated with praziquantel on these ruminant farms and almost 1,000 lambs were vaccinated on the sheep farms. The impact of the newly developed strategies will be evaluated after a few years from the start of the interventions. The intervention strategies implemented in southern Italy were successfully transferred to other endemic areas in Algeria, Tunisia and Greece as part of the Echino-Safe-Med PRIMA project.