ABSTRACT. Three Holstein heifers died after consumption of Baccharis megapotamica var weirii in southern Brazil. Main histologic lesions included degeneration and necrosis of the epithelium from the forestomachs and of the lymphoid tissue of the spleen and lymph nodes.

The genus Baccharis (Compositae) includes approximately 350 species, all native from the Americas. Nearly 120 species have been recorded in Brazil, especially distributed in the southern region (1). Only Baccharis conidifolia and the varieties weirii and megapotamica from Baccharis megapotamica have been, until now, reported as toxic to livestock (2).

CASE REPORT

In a Holstein dairy herd with 225 animals, 3 were affected and died. These 3 animals were pregnant heifers recently imported from Uruguay and introduced into the farm. The animals were introduced in a new paddock with millet pastures and received supplementary oat haylage, concentrates, and mineral mix. This paddock had a large dam with moist surrounding areas where the B megapotamica var weirii (Fig 1) was growing. The animals died close to areas with the plants, which showed evidence of having been eaten.

Only 1 animal was seen ill with bloat and muscular trembling associated with nervous incoordination. Progression was acute and lasted approximately 2 h. Specimens from several organs were collected at necropsy, fixed in 10% neutral buffered formalin, and prepared for microscopy by standard methods. Pathologic findings were similar to those described in previous experimental studies (2-4). Gross lesions included mild edema in the wall of the rumen with erosions, congestion, and reddened-slothing areas of the ruminal mucosa. One animal had severe edema of the final 1/3 of the esophagus involving areas from the caudal mediastium and cardia. Main histologic lesions were degeneration and mild to moderate necrosis of the epithelium from the rumen (Fig 2) and reticulum, and necrosis of the lymphoid tissue of the spleen, mesenteric and mediastinic lymph nodes.

DISCUSSION

B conidifolia, popularly called "mio-mio", is probably the toxic plant most known by southern Brazilian cattle breeders, and outbreaks of poisoning by this species usually occur in the border area (5). To date, spontaneous intoxications due to B megapotamica var weirii in Brazilian cattle have just been referred to as field observations (2). However, experimentally induced intoxications by B megapotamica var weirii have been well studied (2-4). This plant typically occurs on or close to wet soils and flooded areas (2).