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## Accepted Manuscript

Title: Longitudinal prevalence, oocyst shedding and molecular characterisation of *Cryptosporidium* species in sheep across four states in Australia

Author: Rongchang Yang Caroline Jacobson Graham Gardner  
Ian Carmichael Angus J.D. Campbell J. Ng-Hublin Una Ryan



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1 **Longitudinal prevalence, oocyst shedding and molecular characterisation of *Cryptosporidium***  
2 **species in sheep across four states in Australia**

3

4

5 Rongchang Yang<sup>1</sup>, Caroline Jacobson<sup>1</sup>, Graham Gardner<sup>1</sup>, Ian Carmichael<sup>2</sup>, Angus J.D. Campbell<sup>3</sup>,  
6 Ng-Hublin, J. and Una Ryan<sup>1\*</sup>

7

8 <sup>1</sup>*School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University, Murdoch, Western Australia, 6150.*

9 <sup>2</sup>*South Australian Research and Development Institute, 33 Flemington Street, Glenside, SA 5065,*  
10 *Australia.*

11 <sup>3</sup>*Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Melbourne, 250 Princes Highway, Werribee, Victoria*  
12 *3030, Australia*

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15 Corresponding author: Una Ryan

16 Phone: 08 9360 2482

17 Fax: 08 9310 4144

18 E-mail: Una.Ryan@murdoch.edu.au

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20 **Abstract**

21       The prevalence of *Cryptosporidium* in sheep in the eastern states of Australia has not been  
22 well described, therefore a study of the prevalence, oocyst concentration, species and subtypes of  
23 *Cryptosporidium* were assessed from lamb faecal samples at three sampling periods (weaning, post-  
24 weaning and pre-slaughter) from eight farms across South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria  
25 and Western Australia. A total of 3,412 faecal samples were collected from approximately 1,182  
26 lambs across the 4 states and screened for the presence of *Cryptosporidium* using a quantitative  
27 PCR (qPCR) at the actin locus. Positives were typed at the 18S locus and at a second locus using *C.*  
28 *parvum* and *C. hominis* specific qPCR primers. The overall prevalence was 16.9% (95% CI: 15.6-  
29 18.1%) and of the 576 positives, 500 were successfully genotyped. In general, the prevalence of  
30 *Cryptosporidium* was higher in WA than the eastern states. *Cryptosporidium* prevalence peaked at  
31 43.9% and 37.1% at Pingelly (WA2) and Arthur River (WA1) respectively during weaning and at  
32 Pingelly (WA2) during pre-slaughter (36.4%). The range of oocyst shedding at weaning overall  
33 across all states was 63 – 7.9 x10<sup>6</sup> and the median was 3.2 x 10<sup>4</sup> oocysts g<sup>-1</sup>. The following species  
34 were identified; *C. xiaoi* (69% - 345/500), *C. ubiquitum* (17.6% - 88/500), *C. parvum* (9.8% -  
35 49/500), *C. scrofarum* (0.8% - 4/500), mixed *C. parvum* and *C. xiaoi* (2.4% - 12/500), *C. andersoni*  
36 (0.2% -1/500) and sheep genotype 1 (0.2% -1/500). Subtyping of *C. parvum* and *C. ubiquitum*  
37 isolates identified IIa and II d subtype families within *C. parvum* (with II d as the dominant subtype)  
38 and XIIa within *C. ubiquitum*. This is the first published description of *C. parvum* subtypes detected  
39 in lambs in Australia.

40

41 Keywords: *Cryptosporidium*; lambs; qPCR; actin; 18S rRNA; *gp60*; *C. xiaoi*; *C. ubiquitum*; *C.*  
42 *parvum*; *C. scrofarum*

43

44

## 44 1. Introduction

45

46 *Cryptosporidium* is an enteric protozoa parasite that causes diarrhoeal illness in humans and  
47 animals worldwide (Xiao, 2010). Currently there are approximately 25 valid species and more than  
48 50 genotypes. As sheep may potentially contribute significantly to contamination of watersheds, it  
49 is important to understand the public health risk posed by *Cryptosporidium* infections in sheep.

50 Molecular studies have identified at least eight *Cryptosporidium* species in sheep faeces including  
51 *C. parvum*, *C. hominis*, *C. andersoni*, *C. suis*, *C. xiaoi*, *C. fayeri*, *C. ubiquitum* and *C. scrofarum*,  
52 with *C. xiaoi*, *C. ubiquitum* and *C. parvum* most prevalent (Ryan et al., 2005; Santín et al., 2007;  
53 Soltane et al., 2007, Geurden et al., 2008, Mueller-Doblies et al., 2008, Quílez et al., 2008a, Fayer  
54 and Santín, 2009; Giles et al., 2009; Paoletti et al., 2009, Yang et al., 2009; Díaz et al., 2010;  
55 Robertson et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2010; Fiuza et al., 2011; Shen et al., 2011; Sweeny et al., 2011;  
56 Cacciò et al., 2013; Connelly et al., 2013; Imre et al., 2013; Ye et al., 2013). Previous studies  
57 conducted in Australia have examined sheep and pre and post-weaned lambs (typically 4 months of  
58 age and older) in Western Australia (WA) only (Ryan et al., 2005; Yang et al., 2009; Sweeny et al.,  
59 2011). Therefore the aim of the present study was to determine the prevalence, oocyst shedding  
60 concentration and genotypes of *Cryptosporidium* lambs in WA, New South Wales (NSW), Victoria  
61 (Vic) and South Australia (SA) at three sampling periods (weaning, post-weaning and pre-  
62 slaughter) and compare this data between states.

63

## 64 2. Materials and Methods

65

### 66 2.1 Animals and faecal sample collection

67 A total of 3,412 faecal samples were collected directly from the rectum of approximately  
68 1,189 cross-bred lambs from 8 different farms across 4 states (Table 1). Lambs were sampled on 3  
69 occasions (i.e. the same animals were sampled on each occasion) at weaning (approx. 12 weeks of

70 age), post-weaning (approx. 19 weeks) and pre-slaughter (approx. 29 weeks). All sample collection  
71 methods used were approved by the Murdoch University Animal Ethics Committee (approval  
72 number R2352/10).

73

74

## 75 2.2 DNA isolation

76 Genomic DNA was extracted from 200mg of each faecal sample using a QIAamp DNA  
77 Mini Stool Kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany) or from 250mg of each faecal sample using a Power Soil  
78 DNA Kit (MolBio, Carlsbad, California). A negative control (no faecal sample) was used in each  
79 extraction group.

80

## 81 2.3 PCR amplification.

82 All samples were screened at the actin locus using a quantitative PCR (qPCR) using the  
83 forward primer, Allactin F1 5' ATCGTGAAAGAATGACWCAAATTATGTT 3', the reverse  
84 primer Allactin R1 5' ACCTTCATAAATTGGAACGGTGTG 3' and the probe 5'-(FAM)-  
85 CCAGCAATGTATGTTAATA BHQ1 3' which produces a 161 bp product. An internal  
86 amplification control (IAC) consisted of a fragment of a coding region from Jembrana Disease  
87 Virus (JDV) cloned into a pGEM-T vector (Promega, USA) was used as previously described  
88 (Yang et al., 2013). Each 15 µl PCR mixture contained 1× PCR Buffer, 5 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 1 mM  
89 dNTP's, 1.0 U Kapa DNA polymerase (MolBio, Carlsbad, California), 0.2 µM each of forward and  
90 reverse primers, 0.2 µM each of forward and reverse IAC primers, 50 nM of the probe, 50 nM of  
91 IAC probe, 10 copies of IAC template and 1 µl of sample DNA. The PCR cycling conditions  
92 consisted of a pre-melt at 95°C for 3 min and then 45 cycles of 95°C for 30 sec, and a combined  
93 annealing and extension step of 60°C for 45 sec. A standard curve for quantifying *Cryptosporidium*  
94 DNA was generated using a series of dilutions of standard oocyst DNA extracted from *C. parvum*  
95 (IOWA isolate).

96 Positives were also amplified at the 18S ribosomal RNA (rRNA) locus using a nested  
97 protocol previously described (Ryan et al., 2003). All positives were also screened using a *C.*  
98 *parvum* and *C. hominis* specific qPCR at a unique *Cryptosporidium* specific protein-coding locus  
99 previously described (Yang et al., 2009; 2013; Morgan et al., 1997).

100 Sub-genotyping of *C. parvum* isolates was performed using a two-step nested PCR to  
101 amplify a ~832 bp fragment of the *gp60* gene as described (Ng et al., 2008). Subtyping of *C.*  
102 *ubiquitum* was performed using a two-step nested PCR to amplify a ~ 948 bp fragment of the *gp60*  
103 gene as described (Li et al., 2013).

104 PCR contamination controls were used including negative controls and separation of  
105 preparation and amplification areas. The amplified DNA fragments from the secondary PCR  
106 product were separated by gel electrophoresis and purified using an in house filter tip method and  
107 used for sequencing without any further purification as previously described (Yang et al., 2013).

108

#### 109 2.4 Specificity and sensitivity testing of the actin qPCR

110

111 The analytical specificity of the qPCR assay was assessed by testing DNA from *C. muris*, *C.*  
112 *parvum*, *C. hominis*, *C. meleagridis*, *C. felis*, *C. andersoni*, *C. serpentis*, *C. canis*, *C. suis*, *C. bovis*,  
113 *C. fayeri*, *C. macropodum*, *C. ryanae*, *C. xiaoi*, *C. ubiquitum*, *C. tyzzeri*, mouse genotype II and *C.*  
114 *scrofarum* and non-*Cryptosporidium* spp.: *Isospora*, *Tenebrio*, *Giardia duodenalis*, *Cyclospora*,  
115 *Campylobacter* spp., *Salmonella* spp., *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Trichostrongylus* spp., *Teladorsagia*  
116 *circumcincta*, *Haemonchus contortus*, *Streptococcus bovis* (ATCC 33317), *Enterococcus durans*  
117 (ATCC 11576), *Escherichia coli* (ATCC 25922), *Bacillus subtilis* (ATCC 6633) and *Eimeria* sp., as  
118 well as human, sheep and cattle DNA.

119 In order to determine the sensitivity of the assay, the PCR product amplified from *C. xiaoi*  
120 was cloned into the pGEMT-vector (Promega) and transformed into *E. coli* (JM109) competent  
121 cells. Plasmid DNA was isolated using a QIAprep Spin Columns (Qiagen) and sequenced using the

122 T7 sequencing primer (Stratagene, La Jolla, CA, USA) and clones with the correct sequence were  
123 then used. The plasmid copy numbers were calculated based on the plasmid size (base pairs) and  
124 DNA concentration. 10-fold series dilutions of plasmid were conducted from 10,000 copies down to  
125 1 copy of the genomic template for sensitivity testing and these were then spiked into faecal  
126 samples and the DNA extracted and amplified as described above and mean detection limits, RSQ  
127 (R squared) values and % Relative Standard Deviation (RDS) were calculated. Target copy  
128 numbers detected were converted to numbers of oocysts based on the fact that the actin gene in  
129 *Cryptosporidium* is a single copy gene (Kim et al., 1992) and there are 4 haploid sporozoites per  
130 oocyst. Therefore, every 4 copies of actin detected by qPCR were equivalent to 1 oocyst.

131

### 132 *2.5 Investigation of inhibition and efficiency*

133

134 Inhibition in faecal samples was measured using the IAC and amplification efficiency ( $E$ ),  
135 (estimated by using the slope of the standard curve and the formula  $E = -1 + 10^{(-1/\text{slope})}$ ) which was  
136 based on multiple qPCR reactions on serial dilutions of individual DNA samples (neat, 1:10,  
137 1:100). The  $C_t$  values were then plotted versus the log base 10 of the dilution and a linear regression  
138 was performed using the Rotor-Gene 6.0. software.

139

### 140 *2.6 Sequence analysis*

141

142 Purified PCR products were sequenced using an ABI Prism<sup>TM</sup> Dye Terminator Cycle  
143 Sequencing kit (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, California). Nucleotide sequences were analyzed  
144 using Chromas lite version 2.0 (<http://www.technelysium.com.au>) and aligned with reference  
145 sequences from GenBank using Clustal W (<http://www.clustalw.genome.jp>).

146



147 2.7 *Statistical analysis*

148

149 Prevalences were expressed as the percentage of samples positive by PCR, with 95%  
150 confidence intervals calculated assuming a binomial distribution, using the software Quantitative  
151 Parasitology 3.0 (Rózsa et al., 2000). Chi-square and non-parametric analyses were performed using  
152 SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows (SPSS inc. Chicago, USA) to  
153 determine if there was any association between the prevalence and concentration of  
154 *Cryptosporidium* oocysts at different sampling times and across states.

155

156 **3 Results**

157

158 3.1 *Specificity, sensitivity and efficiency testing of the actin qPCR*

159

160 Evaluation of specificity of the actin qPCR assay revealed no cross-reactions with other  
161 genera and detected all the *Cryptosporidium* isolates tested (data not shown). Sensitivity analysis  
162 revealed that the assay could reliably detected 8 copies of the cloned *C. xiaoi* amplicon per  $\mu$ l of  
163 faecal DNA extract which is equivalent to a sensitivity of 2 *Cryptosporidium* oocysts per  $\mu$ l of  
164 faecal DNA extract. The mean RSQ was 0.99 and the % RDS = 1.5%. In our hands, the incidence  
165 of PCR inhibition as determined by the IAC amplification was about 2%. If inhibition was evident,  
166 then the sample was diluted and re-amplified. The mean efficiency for the *Cryptosporidium* qPCR  
167 was 108.4%.

168

169 3.2 *Prevalence of Cryptosporidium from 8 farms across 4 states*

170

171 The overall prevalence of *Cryptosporidium* from 8 farms across 4 states over 3 sampling  
172 periods (weaning, post-weaning and pre-slaughter) was 16.9% (576/3412) (Tables 2 and 3 and Fig.

173 1a). There was no relationship between prevalence and the 3 sampling times ( $p>0.05$ ), as the peak  
174 prevalence occurred at different sampling times across the farms tested. There was however a  
175 significant difference between farms ( $p>0.05$ ). The prevalence of *Cryptosporidium* at WA2 was  
176 significantly higher than all other farms ( $p<0.05$ ). There were also significant differences between  
177 WA1 and SA1 and between NSW and SA1 ( $p<0.05$ ). The prevalence of *Cryptosporidium* was  
178 highest in WA, which peaked at 43.9% and 37.1% at WA2 and WA1 respectively during weaning  
179 and at WA2 during pre-slaughter (36.4%). There were smaller peaks for *Cryptosporidium* at NSW  
180 (27.5% and 22.5% respectively during post-weaning and weaning respectively), at Vic 2 (21% at  
181 weaning), Vic1 (18.6% at post-weaning). In SA, the prevalence peaked at 19.2% at post-weaning at  
182 SA2. The overall prevalence in WA on the 3 farms was 25% (248/992). The prevalence in NSW  
183 was 20.7% (101/487), in Vic was 11.8% (117/989) and in SA, it was 11.3% (107/944), but these  
184 state-wide differences were not significant ( $p>0.05$ )(Fig 1b). Only 4, 2 and 1 lambs from WA, Vic  
185 and NSW respectively were positive across all 3 samplings.

186

### 187 3.3 *Oocyst load*

188

189 Oocyst numbers per gram of faeces ( $g^{-1}$ ) were also determined using qPCR (Tables 2 and 3).  
190 The highest median concentration of *Cryptosporidium* oocysts were shed by lambs at WA2 ( $1.5 \times$   
191  $10^5$  oocysts  $g^{-1}$ ). Across the other farms, median *Cryptosporidium* oocysts concentration peaked  
192 during the pre-slaughter period at SA1, SA2, Vic 2 and WA3 ( $1.4 \times 10^5$ ,  $8.3 \times 10^4$ ,  $9.3 \times 10^4$  and  $1.1$   
193  $\times 10^5$  oocysts  $g^{-1}$  respectively). The median concentration of oocysts shed at Vic1 was low ( $1.6$   
194  $\times 10^3$ -  $1.6 \times 10^4$ ), although individual sheep shed up to  $3.7 \times 10^9$  oocysts  $g^{-1}$  during post-weaning.  
195 This corresponded with a peak prevalence of 18.6% at this time at Vic1. At NSW, the median  
196 concentration of oocysts shed was also low ( $6.3 \times 10^3$ - $1.7 \times 10^4$  oocysts  $g^{-1}$ ) but individual sheep at  
197 NSW shed up to  $2.1 \times 10^8$  and  $1.4 \times 10^7$  oocysts during post-weaning and pre-slaughter respectively.  
198 Across both SA farms, the range of shedding at weaning was  $375$ - $7.9 \times 10^6$  and the median was  $8.8$

199  $\times 10^4$ . The range of oocyst shedding at weaning overall across all states was 63-7.9  $\times 10^6$  and the  
200 median was 3.2  $\times 10^4$ . At pre-slaughter, the range was 260-4.8  $\times 10^7$  and the median was 6.3  $\times 10^4$   
201 (Table 3). Of the 7 samples that were positive at all 3 samplings, no trends were seen in oocysts  
202 concentration; some were high at the weaning sampling (8.1  $\times 10^3$ -1.4  $\times 10^8$ ) and continued to  
203 decrease but others shed an increased concentration of oocysts at the pre-slaughter sampling.

204

### 205 3.4 *Cryptosporidium* genotypes

206

207 The 576 positives detected at the actin locus were screened using *C. parvum*/*C. hominis*  
208 specific primers and the 18S primers and the positives sequenced. Of these, 500 were successfully  
209 genotyped. The following species/genotypes were identified; *C. xiaoi* (69% - 345/500), *C.*  
210 *ubiquitum* (17.6% - 88/500), *C. parvum* (9.8% - 49/500), *C. scrofarum* (previously pig genotype II)  
211 (0.8% - 4/500), mixed *C. parvum* and *C. xiaoi* (2.4% - 12/500), *C. andersoni* (0.2% -1/500) and  
212 sheep genotype 1 (0.2% -1/500) (Table 4).

213 Across the states, *C. xiaoi* was the most prevalent and peaked at 81.4% (57/70) of positive  
214 samples for NSW (Fig. 3). *Cryptosporidium ubiquitum* was the second most prevalent species in SA  
215 at 43.2% (43/88) positive samples and in Vic at 21.7% (20/92), whereas in NSW and WA, *C.*  
216 *parvum* was the second most prevalent species at 10% (7/70) and 10.4% (26/250) compared to  
217 8.6% (6/72) and 9.6% (24/250) respectively for *C. ubiquitum*. *Cryptosporidium scrofarum* was only  
218 identified in Vic and mixed *C. parvum*, *C. xiaoi* infections as well as *C. andersoni* and sheep  
219 genotype I were only identified in WA.

220

### 221 3.5 *Cryptosporidium* subtypes

222

223 Subtyping of *C. parvum* identified IIa and IIc subtype families. All *C. ubiquitum* isolates  
224 typed (n=88) were XIIa (Table 4). The following *C. parvum* subtypes were identified; IIaA15G2R1

225 (n=5), IIdA19G1 (n=10), IIdA18G1 (n=23). The *C. parvum* subtype IIdA15G2R1 was identified at  
226 Vic1 (n=3) and NSW (n=2). Subtype IIdA19G1 was identified in SA1 (n=3), SA2 (n=3), Vic1  
227 (n=1) and Vic2 (n=3). Subtype IIdA18G1 was identified in SA1 (n=1), NSW (n=3), WA1 (n=2),  
228 WA2 (n= 9) and WA2 (n=8).

229

#### 230 4. Discussion

231

232 In the present study, a novel qPCR at the actin locus was developed and the prevalence,  
233 oocyst concentration, species and subtypes of *Cryptosporidium* were assessed from lamb faecal  
234 samples at three sampling periods (weaning, post-weaning and pre-slaughter) from eight farms  
235 across four Australian states.

236 The qPCR assay was very specific for *Cryptosporidium*, as it detected all the  
237 *Cryptosporidium* species tested and did not cross-react with the non-*Cryptosporidium* isolates  
238 analysed. The sensitivity of the assay was determined by cloning the actin *C. xiaoi* PCR amplicon  
239 into a plasmid vector, and then spiking known amounts of plasmid into faecal samples, extracting  
240 the DNA and screening by qPCR. The assay could reliably detect 2 *Cryptosporidium* oocysts per  $\mu$ l  
241 of faecal DNA extract, which is similar to or better than sensitivities reported previously for  
242 *Cryptosporidium* qPCR detection assays (Hadfield et al., 2011; Koken et al., 2013).

243 The overall prevalence of *Cryptosporidium* from 8 farms across 4 states over 3 sampling  
244 periods (weaning, post-weaning and pre-slaughter) was 16.9% (576/3412). There was no  
245 relationship between prevalence and lamb age, which ranged from ~12 weeks (weaning) to ~29  
246 weeks (pre-slaughter). Previous studies in cattle have shown that the highest prevalence occurs in  
247 very young animals (~ 2 weeks of age) (Santín et al., 2008). In sheep, it has been shown that ewes  
248 (2-6 years in age) had a much higher prevalence of *Cryptosporidium* than lambs aged 7-21 days in  
249 age (Santín et al., 2007). However evidence suggests that *Cryptosporidium* prevalence is not  
250 highest in very young lambs. For example, previous studies in WA have reported prevalences by

251 PCR of 26% for slaughter age lambs in WA (Ryan et al., 2005) and 24.5% for pre-weaned lambs  
252 (aged 1-8 weeks) in WA (Yang et al., 2009). A recent study reported that the prevalence in 3-4  
253 week-old and 15-16 week-old lambs was 18.4% and 26.7% respectively (Ye et al., 2013). Another  
254 study reported that the prevalence in 5-6 week old lambs increased from 15% to 25% in 6-10 week  
255 old lambs (Robertson et al., 2010). Further longitudinal research is required to better understand the  
256 relationship between the prevalence of *Cryptosporidium* and lamb age.

257 Oocyst concentration (numbers per gram of faeces) was also determined using qPCR.  
258 Accurate quantification of *Cryptosporidium* oocysts in animal faecal deposits on land is an essential  
259 starting point for estimating catchment *Cryptosporidium* loads (Davies et al., 2003). There are  
260 limited reports, however, on the concentration and environmental loading of *Cryptosporidium*  
261 oocysts as a result of faecal contamination by sheep. It is also important to note that oocyst recovery  
262 rates from faecal samples and across animal types can be highly variable. For example, recovery  
263 rates ranging 14-70% for adult cattle faeces, 0-83% for calf faeces, 4-48% for sheep faeces, 40-73%  
264 for kangaroo faeces, and 3-24% for pig faeces have been reported (Davies et al., 2003). Thus,  
265 oocyst shedding rates reported in various studies may underestimate the number of oocysts unless  
266 recovery efficiency is factored into the analysis. A previous study which examined a range of  
267 animal faeces in Sydney catchments, reported that the range of oocyst shedding concentration for  
268 adult sheep was 1-52,474 g<sup>-1</sup> with a median of 148 g<sup>-1</sup> whereas the range for juvenile sheep was 1-  
269 641 g<sup>-1</sup> with a median of 275 g<sup>-1</sup> (Davies et al., 2003). In the present study, oocyst numbers  
270 (concentration) were determined directly by qPCR from total DNA extractions from unpurified  
271 faecal samples, which obviates the need for recovery rate calculations. The average range of oocyst  
272 shedding concentration at weaning overall (across all states) was 63 - 7.9 x10<sup>6</sup> and the median was  
273 3.2x10<sup>4</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>. At pre-slaughter, the average range was 260-4.8 x 10<sup>7</sup> and the median was 6.3x10<sup>4</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>.  
274 These shedding rates are higher than the previous study and highlights the advantages of using a  
275 method that does not require purification of oocysts and utilises a PCR-based detection method,  
276 which has been shown to be much more sensitive than microscopy (Ryan et al., 2005). The data

277 shows that although the prevalence in SA was lower than WA, oocyst shedding concentrations were  
278 higher in SA.

279 A total of 6 genotypes were identified including *C. xiaoi*, *C. ubiquitum*, *C. parvum*, *C.*  
280 *scrofarum*, *C. andersoni* and sheep genotype 1, with *C. xiaoi* and *C. ubiquitum* responsible for  
281 86.6% of infections typed compared to 12.2% for *C. parvum* (includes the mixed *C. parvum*, *C.*  
282 *xiaoi* isolates). *Cryptosporidium ubiquitum* is a common human pathogen (Xiao, 2010). In  
283 Australia, *C. ubiquitum* has not been identified in the limited typing of Australian human  
284 *Cryptosporidium* isolates that has been conducted to date (Ryan and Power, 2012), however *C.*  
285 *ubiquitum* has been identified in source water in Australia (unpublished) and should be considered a  
286 zoonotic species. *Cryptosporidium xiaoi* has only been reported once in two HIV-positive  
287 individuals in Ethiopia (Adamu et al., 2013). *Cryptosporidium scrofarum* was detected in 4 lambs  
288 from Vic and not in any other samples. It is primarily a porcine parasite (Kváč et al., 2013), but has  
289 previously been identified in sheep and cattle in WA (Ryan et al., 2005; Ng et al., 2011) and has  
290 been reported in an immunocompetent human (Kváč et al., 2009). Sheep genotype I was identified  
291 in one sheep at WA1. This genotype has not been identified in humans and is genetically distinct at  
292 both the 18S and actin loci but most closely related to *C. ubiquitum* (Sweeny et al., 2011).  
293 *Cryptosporidium andersoni* was also identified in one isolate from WA. This is primarily a bovine  
294 parasite but has previously been identified in sheep in WA (Ryan et al., 2005) and a human in NSW  
295 (Waldron et al., 2011a). Therefore 30.8% (154/500) of the positive samples identified were  
296 potentially zoonotic. This is the first report of ovine genotypes from NSW, Vic and SA. Previous  
297 studies have also reported that *C. xiaoi* and *C. ubiquitum* are the dominant species infecting sheep  
298 (Yang et al., 2009; Robertson et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2010; Fiuza et al., 2011), although other  
299 studies have reported that *C. parvum* (Ryan et al., 2005; Mueller-Doblies et al., 2008; Cacciò et al.,  
300 2013; Imre et al., 2013) and even *C. hominis* were more dominant than *C. ubiquitum* in sheep  
301 (Connelly et al., 2013)

302 At the *gp60* locus, two subtype families were identified (IIa and IId). At least 12 *C. parvum*  
303 subtype families (IIa-III) have been identified at this locus, but only IId and especially the most  
304 common subtype family, IIa, appear to be zoonotic (Xiao, 2010). Prior to the present study, ovine-  
305 derived *C. parvum* isolates from Australia had not been subtyped at the *gp60* locus. The *C. parvum*  
306 subtype IIaA15G2R1 was identified in lambs in Vic and NSW. This is a dominant subtype in  
307 ruminants and has been reported in humans and calves in Australia (O'Brien et al., 2008; Waldron  
308 et al., 2011b) and worldwide (Xiao, 2010; Abeywardena et al., 2012; Alyousefi et al., 2012, Silva et  
309 al., 2013). This is the first report of IIaA15G2R1 in lambs in Australia. This subtype was also  
310 previously seen in three lambs linked to a human infection in the United Kingdom (Chalmers et al.,  
311 2005).

312 The *C. parvum* IId subtype family is less common and has been reported mainly from sheep  
313 and goats but has also been reported in humans and cattle overseas (Xiao, 2010). The IId subtype  
314 family has not been reported in cattle in Australia (as previous studies have only identified IIa  
315 subtypes in cattle), but has been reported in humans (Waldron et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2010). In the  
316 present study, subtype IIdA19G1 was identified in lambs from SA and Vic and subtype IIdA18G1  
317 was identified in SA, NSW and WA. Subtype IIdA18G1 was previously identified in lambs in  
318 Spain and subtype IIdA19G1 was identified in both lambs and goats in the same study (Quilez et  
319 al., 2008a). Both subtypes are rare and have not been reported in humans in Australia. Previous  
320 studies have identified IIdA15G1 (Ng et al., 2010) and IIdA24G1 (Waldron et al., 2009) in  
321 individual human patients. In Spain, where both IIa and IId have been identified, IIa subtypes  
322 appear to preferentially infect calves, whereas IId subtypes preferentially infect lambs and goat kids  
323 (Quilez et al., 2008a; 2008b). Of the 38 *C. parvum* subtypes identified in the present study, the IId  
324 subtype family accounted for 87% (33/38) of the subtypes identified. This data along with evidence  
325 from studies overseas suggest that subtype family IId is adapted to lambs (and goat kids), and may  
326 therefore be to be one of the most important reservoirs for this zoonotic group of *C. parvum* isolates  
327 (Quilez et al., 2008a, 2008b; Imre et al., 2013).

328 All *C. ubiquitum* isolates analysed at the *gp60* locus were typed as subtype XIIa. To date  
329 six subtype families (XIIa to XIIf) have been identified in *C. ubiquitum* (Li et al., 2013). XIIa has  
330 been found in ruminants world-wide, XIIb to XIId in rodents in the United States, XIIe and XIIf in  
331 rodents in the Slovak Republic. XIIa, XIIb, XIIc, and XIId have been found in humans, therefore  
332 XIIa is a potentially zoonotic subtype (Li et al., 2013).

333 In conclusion, the present study identified that *Cryptosporidium* is prevalent in lambs across  
334 Australia and that lambs are capable of harboring *Cryptosporidium* species that are known to be  
335 zoonotic as well as those that appear to be host-specific. In addition, lambs may contribute  
336 significant amounts of *Cryptosporidium* oocysts to catchments, which has important implications  
337 for catchment management. Further studies are required to determine the prevalence of *C.*  
338 *ubiquitum* in the human population in Australia, and the extent of economic loss associated with  
339 *Cryptosporidium* in sheep.

340

341

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343

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348 Sweeny.

349

350

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489 Figure 1A. Prevalence (%) of *Cryptosporidium* in sheep faecal samples from 8 farms across 4 states  
490 (NSW, SA, Vic and WA) over 3 sampling times (weaning, post-weaning and pre-slaughter) as  
491 determined by qPCR. 1B. Overall *Cryptosporidium* prevalence per state.

492

493 Figure 2. The prevalence (%) of *Cryptosporidium* species in sheep faecal samples from SA, Vic,  
494 WA and NSW.

495

496

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496 Table 1. Sheep farms sampled during the present study.

497

<b>Farm</b>	<b>Farm location</b>	<b>Mean annual rainfall (mm)</b>	<b>Farm size</b>	<b>Number of sheep</b>	<b>Breed of sheep</b>	<b>Commencement of lambing</b>	<b>Winter stocking rate</b>
SA1	Wirrega, SA	430	1040 ha	1800	Suffolk	mid April	10DSE/ha
SA2	Struan, SA	550	1500 ha	5500	BL/Merino x Suffolk	June	15DSE/ha
Vic1	Rosedale, Victoria	620	300 ha (winter)	300 ewes	BL/Merino x Dorset & Southdown	mid July	10DSE/ha
Vic2	Ballarat, Victoria	750	1960 ha	7000	Merino x Suffolk	early August	13DSE/ha
NSW	Armidale, NSW	495	2958 ha	1000	BL/Merino	May -August	20 DSE/ha
WA1	Pingelly, WA	450	1500 ha	1350	Merino x Suffolk	mid July	12DSE/ha
WA2	West Arthur, WA River	500	1250 ha	1750	Merino x Suffolk	Early August	10DSE/ha
WA3	Frankland, WA	550	560Ha	3300	Merino x Suffolk	Mid July	21 DSE/Ha

498 Note: DSE = dry sheep equivalent, is a standard unit frequently used to compare animal carrying capacity and potential  
 499 productivity of a given farm or area of grazing land. DNA from samples from Western Australia was extracted by Josh  
 500 Sweeny and previously analysed using different primers as described in Sweeny et al., (2011) and Sweeny (2012).  
 501



501 Table 2. Prevalence and number of *Cryptosporidium* oocysts per gram of sheep faeces ( $\text{g}^{-1}$ ) (range  
 502 and median) in samples collected from 8 farms in 4 states over 3 sampling periods. 95% confidence  
 503 intervals are given in parenthesis

504

Farm	Sampling period	Total no of samples	No of positives	Prevalence %	Oocysts $\text{g}^{-1}$	
					Range	Median
SA1	Weaning	165	14	8.5 (4.2-12.7)	938-1.8 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	4.8 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
	Post-weaning	148	9	6.1 (2.2-9.9)	3.9 x 10 <sup>3</sup> -9.8 x 10 <sup>5</sup>	2.3 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	159	15	9.4 (4.9-14.0)	7.3 x 10 <sup>3</sup> -1.7 x 10 <sup>5</sup>	1.4 x 10 <sup>5</sup>
SA2	Weaning	169	30	17.8 (12.0-23.5)	375-7.9 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	3.1 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Post-weaning	156	30	19.2 (13.0-25.4)	313-3.0 x 10 <sup>5</sup>	4.7 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	147	9	6.1 (2.2-10.0)	4.7 x 10 <sup>3</sup> -1.7 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	8.0 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
Vic1	Weaning	180	6	3.3 (0.7-6.0)	125-8.7 x 10 <sup>5</sup>	1.6 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
	Post-weaning	172	32	18.6 (12.8-24.4)	390-3.7 x 10 <sup>9</sup>	5.1 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	160	14	8.8 (4.4-13.1)	1.6 x 10 <sup>3</sup> -7.8 x 10 <sup>4</sup>	1.6 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
Vic2	Weaning	176	37	21 (15.0-27.0)	313-4.8 x 10 <sup>5</sup>	7.8 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Post-weaning	173	16	9.2 (4.9-13.6)	1.0 x 10 <sup>3</sup> -7.1 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	1.8 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	128	12	9.4 (4.3-14.4)	937-6.0 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	9.0 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
NSW	Weaning	160	36	22.5 (16.0-29.0)	313-1.1 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	6.1 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Post-weaning	160	44	27.5 (20.6-43.3)	563-2.1 x 10 <sup>8</sup>	1.7 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	167	21	12.5 (7.5-17.6)	262-1.4 x 10 <sup>7</sup>	1.2 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
WA1-AR	Weaning	124	46	37.1 (28.6-45.6)	125-2.6 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	1.6 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
	Post-weaning	122	18	14.8 (8.5-21.0)	313-1.1 x 10 <sup>5</sup>	4.5 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	121	29	24.0 (16.4-31.6)	375-1.6 x 10 <sup>7</sup>	5.8 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
WA2-PL	Weaning	107	47	43.9 (34.5-53.3)	63-5.3 x 10 <sup>3</sup>	400
	Post-weaning	109	29	26.6 (18.3-34.9)	313-2.4 x 10 <sup>7</sup>	1.5 x 10 <sup>5</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	107	39	36.4 (27.3-45.6)	1.6 x 10 <sup>3</sup> -2.9 x 10 <sup>7</sup>	2.0 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
WA3-FL	Weaning	101	19	18.8 (11.2-26.4)	313-4.7 x 10 <sup>5</sup>	2.3 x 10 <sup>4</sup>
	Post-weaning	101	7	6.9 (2.0-11.9)	313-3.7 x 10 <sup>6</sup>	5.9 x 10 <sup>3</sup>
	Pre-slaughter	100	14	14 (7.2-2-.8)	2.0 x 10 <sup>3</sup> -4.8 x 10 <sup>7</sup>	1.0 x 10 <sup>5</sup>
<b>Total</b>		<b>3412</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>16.9 (15.6-18.1)</b>	<b>63 – 3.7 x 10<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>2.6 x 10<sup>4</sup></b>

505

506

506 Table 3. *Cryptosporidium* oocyst concentration ( $\text{g}^{-1}$ ) and prevalence across four states (pooled  
 507 values for farms). 95% confidence intervals are given in parenthesis.

<b>States</b>	<b>Sampling periods</b>	<b>Oocysts <math>\text{g}^{-1}</math> Range</b>	<b>Oocysts <math>\text{g}^{-1}</math> Median</b>	<b>Prevalence %</b>
<b>SA</b>	Weaning	$375-7.9 \times 10^6$	$8.8 \times 10^4$	13.2 (8.1-18.1)
	Post-weaning	$313-9.8 \times 10^5$	$2.2 \times 10^4$	12.8 (7.6-17.7)
	Pre-slaughter	$4.7 \times 10^3-1.7 \times 10^6$	$1.0 \times 10^5$	7.8 (3.6-12.0)
<b>Vic</b>	Weaning	$125-8.7 \times 10^5$	$1.2 \times 10^4$	12.1 (7.9-16.5)
	Post-weaning	$390-3.7 \times 10^{10}$	$4.1 \times 10^3$	13.9 (8.9-19.0)
	Pre-slaughter	$937-6.0 \times 10^6$	$4.8 \times 10^4$	9.0 (4.4-13.8)
<b>NSW</b>	Weaning	$313- 1.1 \times 10^6$	$6.1 \times 10^3$	22.5 (16.3-29.8)
	Post-weaning	$563 - 2.1 \times 10^8$	$1.7 \times 10^4$	27.5 (20.6-34.4)
	Pre-slaughter	$262-1.4 \times 10^7$	$1.2 \times 10^4$	12.5 (7.5-17.6)
<b>WA</b>	Weaning	$63 - 2.6 \times 10^6$	$1.5 \times 10^4$	33.7 (24.8-41.8)
	Post-weaning	$313-2.4 \times 10^7$	$4.8 \times 10^4$	16.3 (9.6-22.6)
	Pre-slaughter	$262-4.8 \times 10^7$	$6.0 \times 10^4$	25.0 (17-32.7)
<b>All states</b>	Weaning	$63-7.9 \times 10^6$	$3.2 \times 10^4$	19.9 (14.3-26.5)
	Post-weaning	$313-3.7 \times 10^{10}$	$2.6 \times 10^4$	16.2 (11.7-20.9)
	Pre-slaughter	$260-4.8 \times 10^7$	$6.3 \times 10^4$	14.0 (8.1-19.0)

508

509

509 Table 4. Species and subtypes of *Cryptosporidium* detected on 8 farms across 4 states (NSW, SA,  
 510 Vic and WA) over 3 sampling times (weaning, post-weaning and pre-slaughter).  
 511

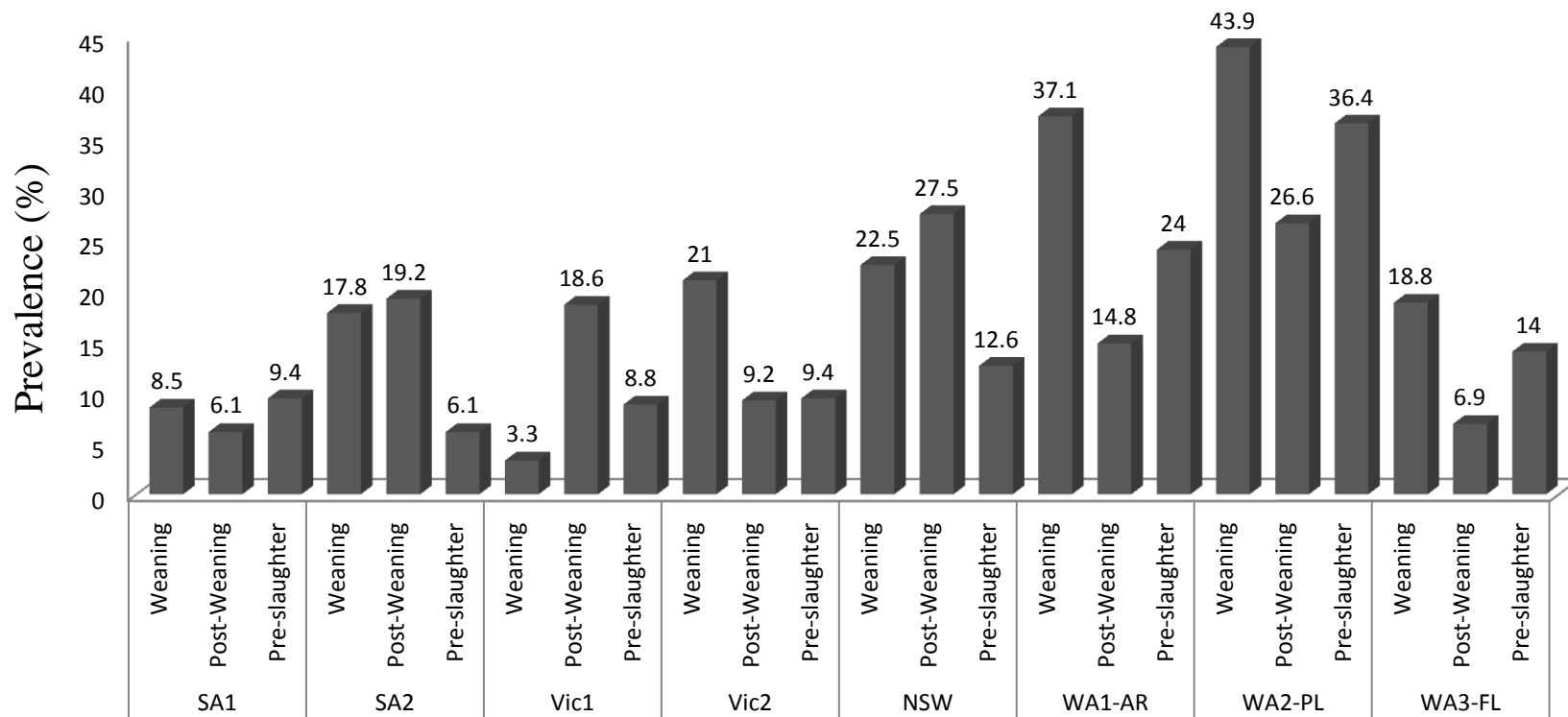
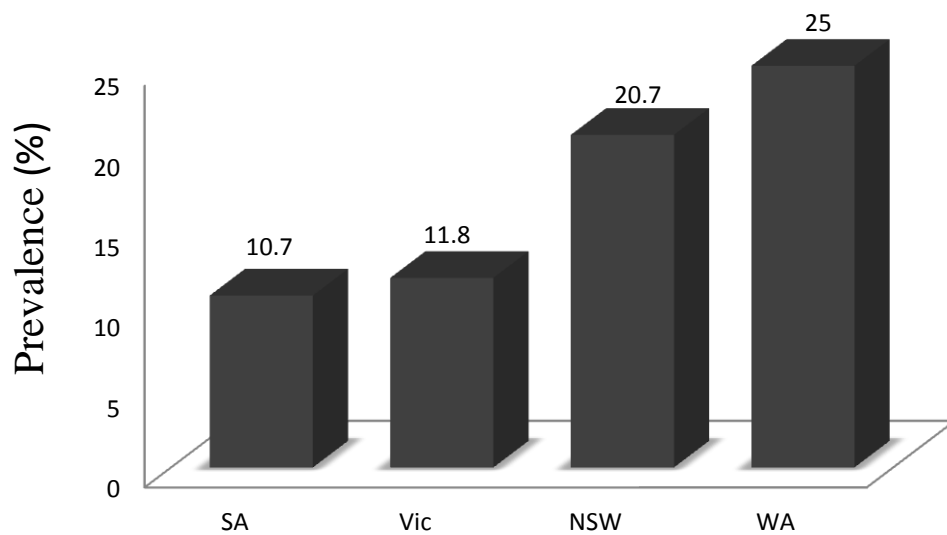
Farm	Sampling period	<i>C. xiaoi</i>	<i>C. ubiquitum</i>	<i>C. parvum</i>	<i>C. scrofarum</i>	Others and mixed infections
SA1	Weaning (n=165)	8	3	3		
	Post-Weaning (n=148)	7	1	1		
	Pre-slaughter (n=159)	9	6			
SA2	Weaning (n=169)	8	19			
	Post-Weaning (n=156)	7	6	1		
	Pre-slaughter (n=147)	4	3	2		
Vic1	Weaning (n=180)	4	1	2		
	Post-Weaning (n=172)	9	3	3	1	
	Pre-slaughter (n=160)	7	5	1	1	
Vic2	Weaning (n=176)	27		1	1	
	Post-Weaning (n=173)	9	4		1	
	Pre-slaughter (n=128)	3	7	2		
NSW	Weaning (n=160)	17		3		
	Post-Weaning (n=160)	34	3	1		
	Pre-slaughter (n=167)	6	3	3		
WA1	Weaning (n=124)	35	4			5 ( <i>C. xiaoi</i> + <i>C. parvum</i> ), 1 ( <i>C. andersoni</i> ) 1 (sheep genotype 1)
	Post-Weaning (n=122)	15	3	2		
	Pre-slaughter (n=121)	24	2	2		1 ( <i>C. xiaoi</i> + <i>C. parvum</i> )
WA2	Weaning (n=107)	37	2	6		2 ( <i>C. xiaoi</i> + <i>C. parvum</i> )
	Post-Weaning (n=109)	21	2	4		2 ( <i>C. xiaoi</i> + <i>C. parvum</i> )
	Pre-slaughter (n=107)	31	2	4		2 ( <i>C. xiaoi</i> + <i>C. parvum</i> )
WA3	Weaning (n=101)	10	3	6		
	Post-Weaning (n=101)	3	3	1		
	Pre-slaughter (n=100)	10	3	1		

Total	345	88	49	4
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512 \*=all *C. ubiquitum* isolates subtyped at the *gp60* locus were XIIa.  
513  
514

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**Figure****A****B**

Figure

