

10. Toxoplasma

10.1. *Toxoplasma* in animals

In most Member States, toxoplasmosis is not notifiable. However in Finland, Germany and Norway, it is a notifiable disease. Most data supplied are related to the cases submitted for diagnostic purposes through their laboratories. Different methods are applied for diagnosis. Either the presence of the parasite is demonstrated by microscopy or serological methods are used to diagnose this disease. Usually, no control measures are taken in case of positive findings.

In previous years the parasite was frequently detected in cats, dogs, sheep, pigs and several other animal species.

Results presented in 2003 are based on diagnostic investigations.

In Germany, 14 outbreaks were notified, 11 in cats, 2 in cattle and one in a zoo animal. In Finland, toxoplasmosis was diagnosed in 8 wild hares, 1 domestic rabbit and in 2 domestic cats. In Norway, 8 out of 34 sheep, 3 out of 5 cats and one hare were diagnosed with *Toxoplasma*. In Sweden, 39% of serologically investigated cats, 3 (18 %) of 17 sheep, 7 (70 %) of 10 goats and 1 (4 %) of 24 tested dogs were positive. None of the faecal samples investigated from cats were positive.

Results from all investigations in 2003 are summarised in Table AN 10.1.

10.2. Toxoplasmosis in humans

Very limited information is available on human toxoplasmosis.

Toxoplasmosis is notifiable in Sweden, Finland and Scotland. In Denmark, the disease is not notifiable but a nation-wide neonatal screening system is established and the results are reported regularly. In Germany, congenital toxoplasmosis is notifiable.

Altogether, 408 cases have been notified in the European Union (figures from 11 Member States). There is a slight increase compared to the previous year, if only those countries are taken into account, which reported their data for the last five years (Figure TO 1). Information available is summarised in Table TO 1.

Clinical toxoplasmosis is most important in immuno-compromised persons and pregnant women, as the infection can be transmitted to the foetus and causes serious disease in the foetus, sometimes with fatal outcome. Knowledge about the source of the infection is limited, but most infections are considered foodborne, mainly due to raw or undercooked meat.

Data on the age distribution of toxoplasmosis were provided by 9 countries (Figure TO 2). In Austria and Portugal, the highest incidence rate is reported in children up to 4 years. In the other countries, most frequently the highest incidence rate occurs in persons between 25 and 44 years old. There is a clear predominance in woman, but males can be affected too.

New Member States

Three New Member States provided data on human toxoplasmosis on a voluntary basis. 3 cases in Latvia, 117 cases in Lithuania and 38 cases in Slovenia were registered. The age distribution of the cases in Latvia and Lithuania is shown in Figure TO2.

Table TO 1. Human toxoplasmosis

Country	Toxoplasmosis					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Austria	-	-	-	-	176	67
Denmark	-	-	-	19 ³	12 ³	13
Finland	31	48	40	48	34	45
Germany ¹	20	31	19	39	18	19
Greece	18	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland ²	0	-	90	6	15	18
Italy	-	-	-	-	15	21
Portugal	0	-	45	40	-	0
Spain (SIM)	66	45	53	58	78	96
Sweden	11	4	13	18	10	17
The Netherlands	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scotland	12	24	20	16	31	17
Northern Ireland	0	1	5	7	12	7
England and Wales	223	156	103	109	94	87
Norway ⁴	0	0	0	0	0	1

¹ Connatal infections only

² Results from laboratories. Serological evidence of recent infection. Not a clinical diagnosis.

³ Newborns, found through the national neonatal screening system

⁴ Encephalitis only

-No information available

Figure TO1. Trend in human toxoplasmosis

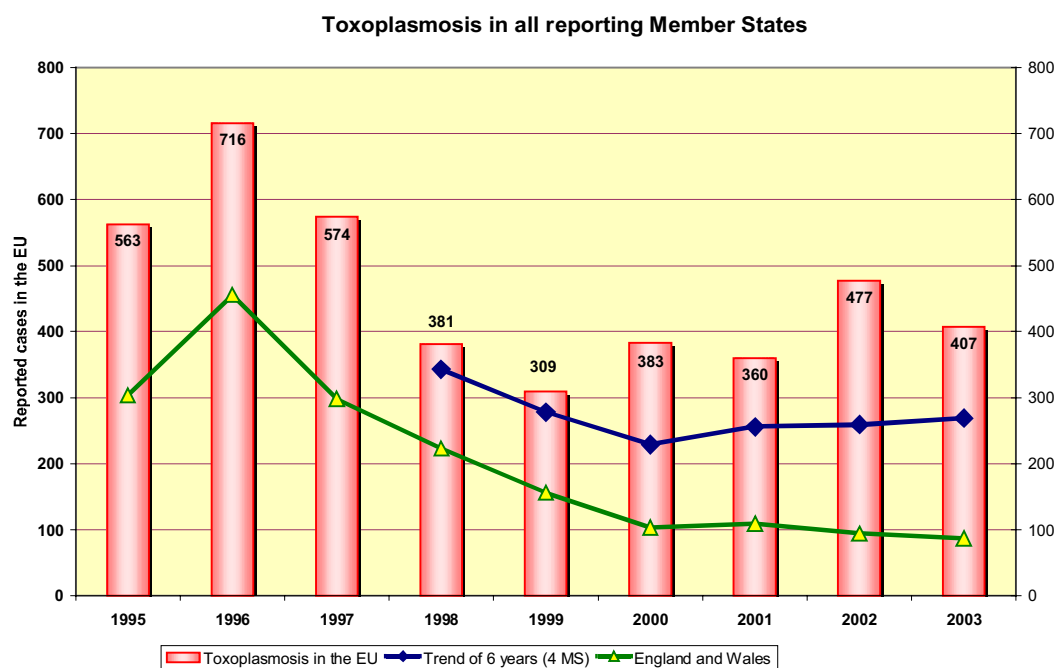
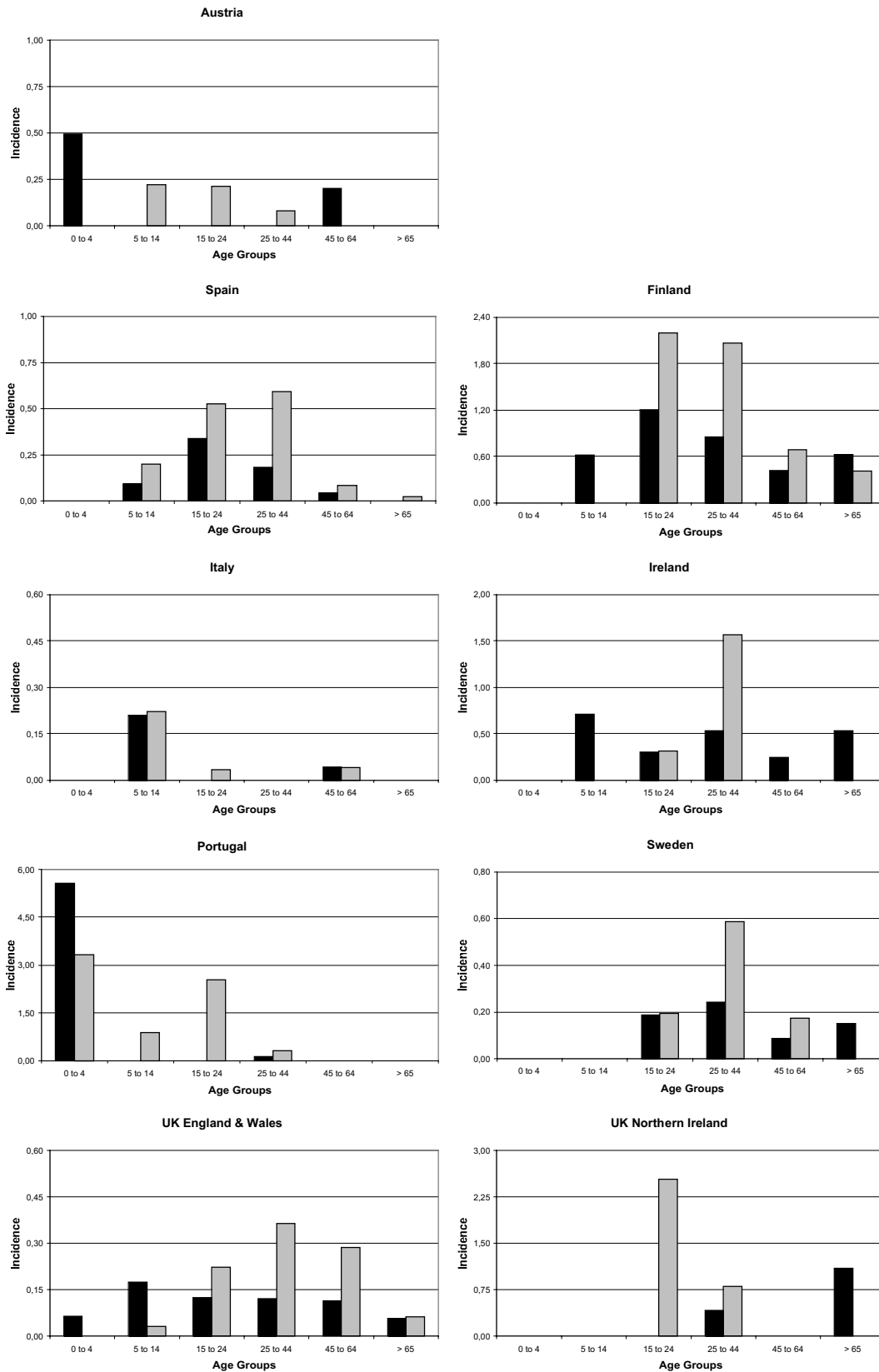
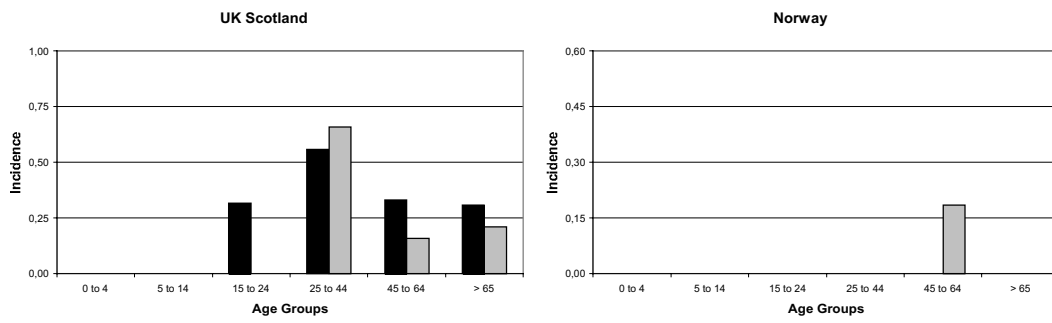


Figure TO 2. Incidence rate per 100 000 inhabitants of toxoplasmosis in different age groups





New Member States

