The serological diagnosis of erysipelas in pigs can be performed by means of the haemolytic test (9), growth inhibition test (GIT) (7), or immunofluorescence test (7).

Results and discussion

Only 8% of 200 apparently healthy pigs were found to be negative in the GIT, compared to 92% when examined in the CFT. Of the 200 animals vaccinated against ER only 0.5% were negative whereas 10.5% when the CFT was used. The animals were then examined in the GIT, compared to 70% in the GIT. When animals with an abortion history were examined there was no significant difference to titre height and distribution between the GIT and the CFT. As the bacteria are carried by many species (8, 9, 10) it is not surprising that many of the apparently healthy animals have titres against ER, when examined with the CFT.

The GIT is a very reliable test for diagnosing ER but the high number of positively reacting animals makes the interpretation of the results very difficult. The titres obtained are usually not high enough to indicate an infection, but sometimes they are not low enough to be considered non-specific and therefore irrelevant. The CFT gives more reliable results compared with the GIT when healthy animals are examined. The CFT can be very useful to determine chronic infections, because 57.5% of the examined animals had titres in comparison with only 21% when the GIT was used.

In conclusion it may be said that the CFT is a very useful, reliable, and accurate test which has many advantages in comparison with other tests and that no need to sterilize the serum and the results can be recorded within a few hours. The antigen is very stable and will last for years without losing its activity, but the most important advantage is the fact that there is no hazard to the laboratory personnel.

Selected references