Reviewer's report


Version: 2 Date: 21 June 2012

Reviewer: Jennifer Smith

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Discretionary Revisions

I think the main issues with this paper have been resolved and my comments mainly relate to changes in the wording that I think will improve the quality of the paper and strengthen your arguments. Your discussion has all the key points but the wording could be more streamlined and focused.

1. Pg 1, paragraph 3 – I would change “Statistically significant spatial clusters were identified in each time period” with “Statistically significant spatial clusters were identified in each of three, five year time periods” to clarify what the time period was (not all 15 years).

2. Pg 3, paragraph 2 – Consider combining the last two sentences in this paragraph as the findings are very similar. Ie: Increased transmission/number of cases has been associated with specific ethnic populations and consumption of unpasteurized food products in California (ref) and Germany (ref).

3. Pg 5, paragraph 1- Add the word “years” after the list of age groups.

4. Do not capitalise seasons in methods, but do in results.

5. Pg 5, paragraph 2 – Consider moving your sentence about the shapefiles to the end, following your statement about the mapping software used.

6. Pg 7, paragraph 1 - Consider changing your sentence to read: “monthly cases were aggregated into four seasons, defined as winter (Dec, Jan, Feb), spring (xxx) etc…….” The word additionally can be removed from the following sentence

7. Pg 8, paragraph 1 - Cut out the sentence “To simplify the description of spatial patterns, we divided Azerbaijan into four dummy regions”. This belongs in the methods and is already stated.

8. Pg 13, paragraph 2 - You state countries where the burden of reported cases is higher in women or equal among both genders, but of more interest is why these differences are observed. I think these two statements could be combined and then briefly state the potential reasons (biases, differences in exposure, etc) for variation.

9. Pg 14, paragraph 2 - Your statement that the “epidemiology of human brucellosis in some areas can potentially shift away from primarily occupational hazard to a food-bourne illness” is a bit misleading in its current context, and sounds as if it is suggesting that the burden of food-borne illness would increase
in response to control of occupational disease. The reference actually makes a
case that controlling the disease in livestock has resulted in it not being an
occupational disease and now cases are acquired in Mexico through food. It
does not follow that the number of food-borne cases will increase, although likely
the proportion of cases will.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a
statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests