Reviewer's report

Title: An outbreak of Streptococcus equi subspecies zooepidemicus associated with consumption of fresh goat cheese

Version: 3 Date: 16 December 2005

Reviewer: Jose Francisco Fernández-Garayzábal

Reviewer's report:

General
The manuscript presented by Markku Kuusi and colleges describes an outbreak of Streptococcus equi subsp. zooepidemicus associated with the consumption of non pasteurized goat cheese, which was confirmed by molecular genetic methods. The manuscript is clearly presented and the methodological approach used by the authors and the description of the results is correct. No problems have been found in the manuscript, although outbreaks of this pathogen associated with ingestion of unpasteurised milk and cheese have been described (Balter et al. Lancet 2000; 355: 1776-80, or Francis et al. J Infect 1993; 27: 317-23) previously.

According with the PFGE results, the same strain of S. equi zooepidemicus was also isolated from the two persons that manufactured the implicated cheese. These means that both persons were infected by direct contact with the infected goats, or during the manipulation of the contaminated milk and/or cheese. This is not the first report about human infections through the direct contact with infected animals, but the authors should include this point in the discussion, highlighting also the potential occupational risk that represents the contact with infected animals (farmers, practitioners,...), or the manipulation of contaminated foods, like cheese or milk in these study.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Specific comments:
• There are probably several grammatical errors through the text (page 5, line19; nasal instead of nose?; page 8, line 9; consecutive means consecutive?).
• Were the two milk samples from the milk tank taken the same day?
• Cheese, vaginal and nasal swabs have normal microflora that could mask the isolation of the S. equi zooepidemicus. Why the authors did not use a selective medium for the isolation of S. equi zooepidemicus from these samples? Could this fact affected to the non recovery of this microorganism from two of the three suspected cheese batches investigated?
• Authors should indicate if all the isolates exhibited also undistinguishable PFGE patterns with the other restriction enzyme (ApaI).
• References: the names of microorganisms in italics.
• Reference 18: authors are missing. Those reports published in MMWR usually are anonymous. Authors should be Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC)?

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests