Reviewer's report

Title: Active surveillance of Q fever in human and animal population of Cyprus

Version: 1 Date: 5 September 2005

Reviewer: philippe brouqui

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an article that reports the features of an active epidemiological survey of the occurrence of Q fever in Cyprus in humans and animals. It is a lot of work done for a survey of 750,000 inhabitants of the island. The data are convincing and emphasize on the fact that C burnetii is prevalent in Cyprus but that most primary infections are asymptomatic and that the disease occurs rarely. The research is important and the data interesting but the paper lacks work especially statistical analysis work of the huge data collected during this survey.

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

The major comments in this article is that there is obviously a large number of data that have been collected and that their restitution can be improved. For example
- the incidence rate should be given (Nb of new cases / Total number of survey population) / Year.
- The incidence rate can be compared within groups of peoples. Ex: incidence rate for seroconversion in humans, incidence rate for seroconversion in animals, incidence rate for Q fever in humans in each village, in Cyprus, incidence rate for Q fever in kids compare to adults (it as been reported that kids were more sensitive to Q fever) ....... The manuscript can be improved by a little bit more statistical work may be with the help of a biostatistic expert. Throughout the text it seems that there is enough interesting data collected to be analysed.
- In the material and method, statistical analysis method is not appropriated as no comparison have been reported in the text nor in the table.
- The authors have made some isolate of C burnetii with is very good because it's not easy but the reviewer would like that a short description of the shell vial technique and the serological technique be described for readers not aware of such techniques.
- References on Q fever are somewhat old there is more recent and up to date references on Q fever than Aiken (1987)

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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)
- There is errors in spelling "burnettii" should be "burnetii"
- Some environmental characteristics of Cyprus would be helpful to readers to understand why Q fever is so likely in this country (breeding index, livestock....)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes

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