Author's response to reviews

Title: Large serological survey showing cocirculation of Ebola and Marburg viruses in Gabonese bat populations, and a high seroprevalence of both viruses in Rousettus aegyptiacus

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Please find enclosed a revised version of our manuscript #3147926952587346.
Answers to reviewer 1’s specific comments are provided below.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1- We are going round and round this issue of Microchiroptera and vouchers. I find it painful to hear that a huge sample of bats like this would be developed, but no vouchers would be saved. I simply find that irresponsible, and I find it unconscionable as credible science. I hope that the authors, in the future, will consider these points. That the authors added the explanatory caveat as to their sampling and the reason for lack of vouchers/IDs is the best remedy at this stage. HOWEVER, not reporting the data? No way. Need to re-add those data and results back into the manuscript ... indeed, this is a MUST.

We have re-added these results in the manuscript and in the figure 1.

Minor Essential Revisions
2- The authors’ response regarding addition of the GenBank numbers is nothing short of silly. It takes 1-2 lines to provide those numbers, and it is no way irresponsible to do so. Rather, publishing a paper that talks about some sequence data BUT DOES NOT SAY WHICH GENBANK RECORDS are being discussed is highly irresponsible. Just add them into the Methods section, WITH a comment that they have already been published.

We have added the Genbank numbers in the Method section of the manuscript.

3- I would also suggest using fewer subheadings in the Results.

We have removed one subheading.

4- A bit disingenuous to talk about the 15% diversity previously observed among East Africa Marburg isolates. Within non-RAVN and within RAVN isolates, diversity is quite a bit lower, and these sequences would probably be pretty interesting. But just stating that the East African isolates are diverse is not completely true.

We talked about the 15% of diversity of the East African Marburg isolates to highlight the existence of a different MARV cluster in Central Africa (Gabon and Angola).

5- Top of P14 -- saying "Rousettus and/or other Microchiroptera speceis" sounds like Rousettus is a microchiropteran genus. Not true.

This error has been corrected.

Discretionary Revisions
6- Should put some thought into what the cave tie means in Rousettus. Does this mean that Rousettus that live in caves have higher prevalences, versus other Rousettus that live outside, which have lower prevalences? Or could sick Rousettus just go and hang out in the caves? This point may be worthy of some discussion.
Rousettus bats usually live in caves but some groups can occasionally roost outside in the trees. As we said in the article, Marburg virus ecology appears to be linked to the caves, probably because the viral circulation (transmission) must be higher between the Rousettus living in this biotope (higher densities of bats and close habitat). This could explain why the Rousettus living in the caves have a higher MARV prevalence.