Reviewer's report

Title: An outbreak of Salmonella enteritidis phage type 34a infection associated with a Chinese restaurant in Suffolk, United Kingdom.

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Reviewer: John Threlfall

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The manuscript describes the epidemiological and microbiological investigations associated with an outbreak of Salmonella Enteritidis infection which occurred in Suffolk, England in July 2002, in which eggs were epidemiologically implicated as the reservoir of infection.

The paper is in general well written but there are several areas that need correction or expansion, particularly relating to the microbiological aspects of the investigation.

Salmonella enteritidis
The accepted international designation for salmonella serovars is as follows: The first time the serotype is mentioned it should be written as ‘Salmonella enterica serovar Enteritidis. It may then be referred to as Salmonella Enteritidis or S. Enteritidis – not, S. enteritidis. Please note that there is also a space between the ‘S’ and ‘Enteritidis’.

Background
Para 1, line 4. The third most common serovar in humans in 2003 was S. Virchow, not S. Agona

Epidemiological, statistical and environmental investigations
These all seem to have been performed in a satisfactory way, following established procedures.

Microbiological
The isolates of Salmonella had most likely already been partially identified before sending to the reference laboratory. The referral was for phage typing and not serotyping.

Could the authors provide more details of the laboratory tests – ie, the method used for phage typing, how were the strains identified as phage type 34a, etc. This is obviously a very critical part of the investigation, particularly as two different phage types were identified.

Results
Microbiological
See above. Could the authors also comment on whether there is any molecular relationship between phage type 34a and phage type 4.

Discussion
p10, para 3. It should be noted that the outbreak in the USA was caused by a strain of phage type 34 and not 34a.
p11, para 2. It may have been relevant to have cited recent studies that have implicated Spanish eggs as a reservoir of infection for several outbreaks of S. Enteritidis of a range of phage types, in England and Wales.

General point.
It is very disappointing that a member of staff of the reference laboratory has not been included in
the authorship, nor has the work of the laboratory been acknowledged. The phage typing was of paramount importance in this investigation, particularly as the results indicated that not all isolates belonged to phage type 34a. Furthermore, identification of the predominant phage type provided invaluable information as to the possible source of infection.