Reviewer’s report

Title: Analysis of geographic distribution of HFRS in Liaoning province between 2000 and 2005

Version: 3 Date: 22 January 2007

Reviewer: Clas Ahlm

Reviewer’s report:

General
This work comprises an impressive amount of HFRS cases over a 5-year period in an highly endemic area of China. Studying the epidemiology of HFRS is of interest for the public health. My major concern is, however, that this work is very similar to the previous published work of Liqun Fang et al. BMC Infectious Diseases 2006, 6:77 (26 April 2006) which is a geographic analysis of HFRS in whole China. The same methodology and presentation is used which could be natural but even some sentences are identical (in the abstract and in the Background section).

The present work which is limited to Liaoning province should then hopefully be more developed and advanced ie. including more detailed analysis and more variables. This is not the fact.

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

Remarks and questions:
1. How are the cases collected? Could there be any bias in the report system?
2. The manuscript doesn’t include data regarding the sex and age related incidence which probably could be obtained from the present figures and the census.
3. Are there any seasonal or year to year variation in the incidence of HFRS in this region?
4. The incidence is given at the county level. Could clusters be identified on a smaller scale?
5. Is there a possibility to include additional environmental factors in the GIS analysis?

On page 8 and 9 there are some statements about the humidity and presence of forest but without any analysis of these parameters in relation to the geographic distribution presented in this manuscript.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Minor comments:
Page 4, 3rd paragraph, 5th line. The incidence is given as 8.65 per 10,000 whereas in other parts the incidence is per 100,000 inhabitants.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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