Reviewer’s report

**Title:** “Our food consumption practices do not cause Rift Valley Fever in humans”: A qualitative analysis of lay perceptions of risk factors in a pastoral community in Kenya

**Version:** 1  
**Date:** 20 September 2015

**Reviewer:** Roni Neff

Reviewer’s report:

Overall, this was an excellent article – fascinating, well written, nicely researched and reported, addressing an important gap in the evidence, and most importantly, it has the potential to make an impact on how RVF is addressed.

**MAJOR REVISIONS**

1. The knowledge gaps section is often repetitive of the earlier sections. I’d suggest you consider putting all the quotes and data into the initial characterization and then have the knowledge gaps section focus on synthesizing information and discussing these gaps. If you prefer not to do this, then find another strategy to reduce the repetition.

2. P. 16 line 13-14 is too brief. Please add at least a paragraph discussing next steps, including additional research needs, but especially how to translate these findings into practical interventions - perhaps using the HBM as a framework. If we know that the community members didn’t take the existing communications seriously, then what else should be done? Perhaps mention insights from parallels to other health communications challenges where they have dealt with community misconceptions.

**MINOR REVISIONS**

1. p.1 line 25 and p.14, line 15: “observed” – change to “believed”

2. p.3 line 18 – “increased risk” – the text suggests risk, but needs a little more to support the idea that it’s increasing.

3. p.7 ethics statement – Was information later provided to respondents to address their misconceptions?

4. P9, lines 13-15 – it seems like they are making excuses. But why would they do so, if they did not see it as a risk? Is it because they think the interviewer does? Discuss briefly.

5. p.9, line 21 “just had to” – clarify. Do you mean because it tasted good?

6. p.11 line 5 – this quote is highly similar to one on the prior page. Even if from different subjects, preferable to use more differentiated quotes.

7. p.11 line 13 – “observed” – this sounds like it could be a casual observation rather than a research study.
8. p.13, line 9: “understood” – replace with “addressed”

9. p.13 starting on line 14 – this discussion of the use of animal products as treatment for RVF is a separate issue. Suggest moving this into the earlier characterization of findings, or at least a separate or more inclusive section header.

10. do we know anything about the extent to which cooking meat/boiling milk makes it safer? P.14 line 16 suggestions this is a misconception. Also, if the animal products could become safer, what about handwashing, using gloves during slaughter/butchering/preparation? And – is it always obvious that an animal is infected?

11. p.14, line 18 – instead of slaughter, you mean butcher? (can’t slaughter if already dead. #)

12. p.15 line 6 – direct secretions – do you mean the human’s secretions after becoming infected? Clarify.

13. Title ‘limitations’ instead ‘strengths and limitations’, since that is what is covered.

14. There have been many critiques of the health belief model, suggesting that often behaviors may also be driven by non-rational/non-considered factors like habits or unquestioned cultural norms. This article makes a case for the idea that these food consumption practices are based on rational factors, but I wonder if there is more to it. Can you comment?

15. On a related note, please comment a little more on the diversity of risk perceptions, if there was any. Some parts of this suggested that people did not perceive risk at all, and others suggested more of a calculated risk benefit decision, with risk perceived as relatively low but not zero.

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

Consider retitling, “knowledge gaps”, because this term could refer to gaps in professional/research knowledge rather than the subjects’ knowledge gaps.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.