Letters to the Editor

*Mycobacterium microti*: More Widespread than Previously Thought

*Mycobacterium microti* typically causes disease in voles, wood mice, and shrews (6). Only rarely has this bacterium been isolated from other animals, among which are a llama, cats, pigs, a rock hyrax, and a ferret (2, 4, 5). Recently, *M. microti* isolates from different sources were characterized by using novel genetic markers (5), and this study for the first time disclosed four cases of *M. microti* infections in humans in The Netherlands. Here we describe the finding of additional *M. microti* infections in animals and a human in the United Kingdom (UK) that were identified by spoligotyping (3).

In the framework of a European Union project on the development of novel standardized methodology for the identification of and nomenclature for *Mycobacterium bovis*, spoligotype patterns of *M. tuberculosis* complex strains whose patterns are in the CVL database suggest that these isolates represent *M. microti*. The finding of isolates from animals and a human with identical or nearly identical spoligotypes within the CVL database suggests that these isolates represent *M. microti*.

Due to the fastidious nature of *M. microti* and the difficulties in characterizing this bacterial species by traditional methods (4), the prevalence, geographical distribution, and host range of this organism may have been underestimated. Our study suggests that *M. microti* is more widespread among different hosts than previously thought.

| TABLE 1. Spoligotype patterns and information on the isolates described in this studya |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
|     Type of pattern |     Spoligotype |     Laboratory |     Sourceb |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Vole  | . . . . . . . . . . .      | RIVM          | Vole (5)     |
|      | . . . . . . . . . . .      | CVL           | human (4)    |
|      | . . . . . . . . . . .      | CVL           | ferret (1)   |
|      | . . . . . . . . . . .      | CVL           | pig (1)      |
| Llama | . . . . . . . . . . .      | RIVM          | Llama (1)    |
|      | . . . . . . . . . . .      | CVL           | cat (5)      |
|      | . . . . . . . . . . .      | CVL           | human (1)    |
|      | . . . . . . . . . . .      | CVL           | cat (1)      |

a The spoligotypes from the RIVM represent 12 recently characterized *M. microti* strains (5). The remaining spoligotypes were of 11 previously uncharacterized *M. tuberculosis* complex strains whose patterns are in the CVL database.

b Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of isolates.

Spoligotype present in the database.

REFERENCES


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