



July 2019

Report on the monitoring of zoonoses and food-borne disease outbreaks

Data for 2018

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Summary

In 2018, campylobacteriosis was once again the zoonosis¹ most commonly recorded in humans. A total of 7,675 cases of campylobacteriosis that had been confirmed by laboratory diagnosis were reported. This corresponds to a reporting rate of 90 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants. This is a slight increase compared to 2017 (7,219 cases). In most cases, humans are infected by contaminated food, with poultry meat being the main source of infection. The bacterium, which is infectious for humans, occurs naturally in the gut of chickens and does not pose a threat to their health.

The second most common zoonosis in Switzerland is salmonellosis. A total of 1,467 cases of salmonellosis in humans that had been confirmed by laboratory diagnosis were reported in 2018, corresponding to a reporting rate of 17 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of cases fell slightly compared with 2017 (1,835 cases). The number of salmonellosis cases in animals (98 cases) also decreased slightly compared with 2017 (105 cases). Cattle, reptiles and dogs were mainly affected.

With a total of 822 confirmed cases, the number of infections with verotoxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (VTEC) in humans increased again in 2018 (696 cases in 2017). The resulting reporting rate of 9.7 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants is the highest since mandatory reporting was introduced in 1999. The main cause of this increase is thought to be the increased testing for VTEC due to new technological methods and the associated more frequent detection of cases.

In 2018, a total of 112 cases of tularaemia in humans were reported, corresponding to 1.3 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of cases has more than doubled since 2016. Tick bites were the main source of infection. The prevalence of ticks (*Ixodes ricinus*) infected with *F. tularensis* in Switzerland is only approximately 0.01%. However, regions with an above-average contamination rate have been identified that correlate with elevated local reporting rates for human cases. A total of 23 cases of tularaemia were reported in animals, with hares affected in all cases. This number of cases is comparatively high. The increase in cases is due to the increased number of hares submitted for investigation. Why more hares were submitted is not known.

In 2018, increased numbers of Usutu virus infections were detected in wild birds and zoo birds. In total, there were 44 confirmed cases, mainly affecting blackbirds. Isolated cases also occurred in other songbirds, crows and mallard ducks. The infections were found mainly in the cantons of Zurich and Aargau. The exceptionally dry and hot summer is suspected to be a possible reason for the increased number of cases.

Outbreaks of food-borne diseases have been rare in Switzerland for many years. In the year under review, 12 such incidents were reported. However, this figure is below the figure for 2017 (18).

¹ A disease that can be transmitted between humans and animals.