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## Prevalence of major foodborne pathogens in food confiscated from air passenger luggage.

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### Abstract

The EU has issued several directives and regulations pertaining to the importation of animals and products of animal origin (POAO) and veterinary controls on importation. Unfortunately, little information is available concerning associated risks and no attempts have been made to collect baseline data on the actual prevalence of zoonotic agents in POAO carried by travellers. To meet these challenges the EU recently introduced and financed a research project "PROMISE". Its main objectives were to assess the risks involved when foodborne pathogens are introduced to the EU via uncontrolled imports. With special permission of the Austrian health authorities, spot-checks were made of the luggage of 61,355 passengers from 240 flights from non-EU countries arriving at the Vienna International Airport (VIE airport). Over a period of eight months (August 2012 through March 2013) 1473 POAO items were confiscated. A total of 600 samples were suitable for *Salmonella* spp., *Campylobacter* spp., verotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* and *Listeria monocytogenes* prevalence analysis. Foodborne pathogens could be detected in 5% (30/600) of all samples. The highest prevalence was attributed to *L. monocytogenes*, at 2.5%, followed by VTEC and *Salmonella* spp. at 1.3% and 1.2%, respectively. *Campylobacter* spp. was not present in any of the 600 samples. Multi-locus sequence typing (MLST) of *L. monocytogenes* revealed that current sequence types (ST) corresponded to the worldwide most present clonal complexes 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, and 121. Generally, *L. monocytogenes* ST9 was the predominant allelic profile, which was mainly isolated from Turkish meat products.

**KEYWORDS:** Airport; Bush meat; Coagulase positive staphylococci; *Listeria monocytogenes*; *Salmonella* spp.; Verotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (VTEC)

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