Monitoring of Francisella tularensis and Yersinia pseudotuberculosis in Danish hares (Lepus europaeus) by fluorescent in-situ hybridization - DTU Orbit (07/01/2019)

The National Veterinary Institute conducts general health surveillance of wildlife by examination of dead animals submitted by private individuals and government agencies from across Denmark. During 2012 and 2013, 1,265 terrestrial mammals, 76 marine mammals and 262 birds were examined. A total of 59 hares (Lepus Europaeus) have been screened for presence of the zoonotic bacteria Francisella tularensis and Yersinia pseudotuberculosis by fluorescent in-situ hybridization (FISH). Ten hares were positive for Y. pseudotuberculosis and one was positive for F. tularensis. F. tularensis and Y. pseudotuberculosis has a wide host range and causes high mortality in hares. When it comes to zoonotic potential F. tularensis poses the major risk for humans, where it causes tularemia - a potentially deadly disease. FISH is an easy, cheap and not least safe method for monitoring F. tularensis and Y. pseudotuberculosis. Health surveillance of wildlife is vital in order to track changes in disease prevalence. The frequent detection of zoonotic agents in wild hares emphasizes the importance of handling game - and especially dead wildlife - with strict hygiene.

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