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**Validation of Etest® for the determination of antibiotic susceptibilities of *Francisella tularensis***

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**Aims:** To assess the antibiotic susceptibility of a panel of *Francisella tularensis* subsp. *holarctica* strains isolated in France and to evaluate the accuracy of the Etest® technique by comparison with a reference method.

**Methods:** We determined the MICs of eight antibiotics for 71 strains of *F. tularensis* subsp. *holarctica* isolated in France, by agar dilution and Etest® methods on IsoVitaleX™-supplemented Mueller-Hinton II agar. We assessed susceptibility to doxycycline, nalidixic acid, ciprofloxacin, rifampicin, streptomycin, gentamicin, telithromycin and chloramphenicol.

**Results:** All isolates were fully susceptible to all antibiotics tested. The two methods gave similar MICs in more than 85 % of cases for ciprofloxacin, doxycycline and streptomycin. Susceptibility classification was identical with both methods for all antibiotics, even those for which poor agreement was observed between MIC values. Antibiotic susceptibilities to gentamicin, ciprofloxacin and doxycycline were also determined by these two methods on supplemented chocolate medium. On this medium, more than 80 % agreement was observed for the MICs of ciprofloxacin and doxycycline and 77% agreement was observed for gentamicin.

**Conclusions:** All French isolates of *F. tularensis* subsp. *holarctica* tested were susceptible to the main antibiotics proposed for treatment or prophylaxis of tularaemia. Etest® appears to be a practical and reliable method for studying the antimicrobial susceptibility of *F. tularensis*, including the subspecies *tularensis*, on supplemented Mueller-Hinton II reference medium. This technique can also be applied by routine or field laboratories with ready-to-use, commercially available, supplemented chocolate agar medium.