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Prevalence of *Francisella tularensis* in European brown hare populations in Lower Saxony, Germany

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Tularemia is a notifiable disease in Germany in consequence of its contagiousness and zoonotic potential. Recently tularemia got into the public focus in Germany due to cases of human infections after contact with European brown hares. The knowledge about the occurrence and spreading of tularemia is a precondition of a successful diagnosis, treatment and management of human infections. However, in Lower Saxony as in many other German states and European countries there is no information about the incidence or prevalence of *Francisella tularensis* within the European brown hare population. Therefore in an ongoing study of the LAVES – Veterinary Institute Hannover in collaboration with the IWfO, the FLI and the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology we try to evaluate this situation. To date more than 1,700 European brown hares were investigated.