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**SPARROWS, FLIES, AND RODENTS AS RESERVOIRS OF
CAMPYLOBACTER SPP. ON A DAIRY FARM**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Veterinary Science in Veterinary Public Health
and Meat Hygiene**

**At Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.**

BIJAY ADHIKARI

2003

ERRATA

- Page v, line 13: This study investigated (rather than investigates)
Page v, line 20: a sample size of 52 was taken
Page V, line 23: collected (rather than calculated)
Page xi, 1.1 & 3.2: *Campylobacter* in italics
Page 16, line 18: Table 2 should be Table 1.2
Page 17, Table 1.2: *C. jejuni* subsp *doylei* should be hippurate V
C. nitrofigillis should be catalase +, nitrate + and hippurate -
C. upsaliensis should be catalase W
Page 28, line 7 & 8: detection (rather than isolation)
Page 31, line 5: contaminated (rather than contamination)
Page 34, line 16: calves (rather than cattle)
Page 39, line 9: remove since from the sentence beginning "Since sheep and goats..."
Page 49, line 4: 40-fold (rather than 40 times)
Page 56, line 7: remove "(Fig 2.8)"
Page 61, line 5: A 30µg nalidixic acid (NA30) and a 30µg cephalothin (C30) antibiotic disc
Page 67, last line: remove "and Table 3.2"
Page 73, line 7: *Campylobacter jejuni* isolates were then classified into patterns A to V on the basis of a one or more band difference.
Page 80, line 1: shows (rather than showing)
Page 80, line 3: Letters (rather than Alphabetes...)
Page 81, line 1: *C. jejuni* in italics
Page 82, Figure 3.7: proportion (rather than percentage)
Page 85, line 1: there was a presence of *Campylobacter jejuni* in some milking cows at Massey No. 4 dairy farm over a 24 month period.
Page 88, line 13: restriction pattern X and XIV (Table 3.6 and Fig. 3.8)
Page 89 and 90 revision of conclusions as below:

Campylobacter jejuni has been isolated from most animal species worldwide. Despite its importance as a human and animal pathogen, relatively little is understood of the mechanisms of *C. jejuni*-associated disease in animals and humans.

This study suggested that dairy cows, rodents, sparrows and flies could be potential reservoirs of *Campylobacter* on a dairy farm. The PFGE analysis of *C. jejuni* isolates from the dairy farm showed a high degree of diversity of the organisms within a limited geographical area. Isolates with common restriction patterns (identical clones) infecting cattle, sparrows, flies and rodents suggested a common source of infection.

The high prevalence of asymptomatic carriage of *C. jejuni* found in cows could be sufficient to maintain infections within the dairy farm ecology via environmental contamination. The number of campylobacters shed by cattle defaecating 25 kg of fresh faeces per animal per day (Matsuzaki, 1975) would exceed that shed by sparrows or rodents, and as such cattle would be expected to constitute a more significant source of environmental contamination. To determine the most likely and significant routes of transmission, further studies of the epidemiology of *Campylobacter* in the farm ecology are needed.

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents
Shree Chiranjibi Adhikari
&
Tulasa D. Adhikari

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ABSTRACT

The reported numbers of human *Campylobacter jejuni* infections have increased considerably in many countries during the last few years. In New Zealand, the current annual incidence rate (302.5 cases/100 000) of human campylobacteriosis is higher than that of any other notifiable disease, and surpasses the incidence of campylobacteriosis reported by other developed countries. Although *Campylobacter jejuni* has been isolated from poultry at high prevalence rates worldwide, poultry are probably not the only important source of human campylobacteriosis as it is well documented that many other animal species (sheep, pigs, cattle and free-living birds and mammals) can be carriers of zoonotic campylobacters. The high incidence of the disease in people could be related to the consumption of poorly cooked meat, drinking contaminated water, overseas travel and animal contact.

This study investigates the potential role of free-living animals (sparrows, rodents and flies) as potential reservoirs of *Campylobacter* spp. and was carried out at Massey University No. 4 dairy farm. We isolated *Campylobacter* from the faeces of cattle and from other samples, and used pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) typing of the organisms to determine the similarity between isolates. This study also includes a comparison of the prevalence and genetic diversity of *Campylobacter* isolated from sparrow populations on the farm and from an urban environment.

Based on the results of a previous study on the same farm, sample size of 52 were taken for the dairy cows in order to obtain results at the 90% confidence level within 10% accuracy. Faecal samples from 53 farm sparrows, 65 rodents and 56 flies were collected and examined for the presence of thermophilic *Campylobacter* spp. Faecal samples were also collected from 53 urban sparrows from "The Square" in the central urban area of Palmerston North city about 7 km from the dairy farm. A convenient number of samples of five of grass silage and two from each of water, worker's boots and aprons were collected with the aim to determine the presence of campylobacters in these samples.

All samples were collected between the 5th April 2002 and 25th May 2002. Random samples of rectal contents from 52 Friesian dairy cows were collected during milking time. Rodents were trapped in the feed storage premises approximately 15m from the milking shed using standard spring loaded, baited traps. Flies were captured around the milking shed using standard fly-traps. Bird samples were collected from an 8×10 feet tarpaulin placed on the ground under a tree where sparrows were roosting about 50m from the milking shed. Feed was provided to attract the birds. The same method was used to collect sparrow droppings in the urban area about 7 km from the farm.

Campylobacter jejuni was the only *Campylobacter* species isolated from the 290 samples collected at the dairy farm and from sparrows in the urban area. The highest isolation rate was found in dairy cows (54%), followed by urban sparrows (40%), farm sparrows (38%), rodents (11%) and flies (9%). Other samples from the farm environment such as grass silage, water, worker's apron and boots were also found to be positive for *C. jejuni*. Most of the rodents caught during the study period were mice. The high isolation rate in this study of *Campylobacter* from dairy cows (54%) and sparrows (40%) supports the notation that these species are important reservoirs of infection. Overall the results of the present and previous study show that at least some dairy cows from the same farm can be asymptomatic carriers (intermittent or persistent) of *Campylobacter jejuni* for at least 24 months.

Molecular characterisation of genomic DNA from 61 *C. jejuni* isolates from farm and urban sources obtained during the study was performed by PFGE after digestion with the enzyme *Sma* I. Of the 22 restriction patterns obtained seven were common to more than one source. The PFGE typing yielded seven, six, nine, six and three restriction patterns from dairy cows, farm sparrows, urban sparrows, rodents and flies respectively. PFGE analysis of the *C. jejuni* isolates shows a high degree of diversity of the organisms within a limited geographical area. But the finding of some common restriction patterns provides evidence of identical clones infecting cattle, sparrows, flies and rodents.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
THESIS DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW	1
1.1 General introduction	1
1.2 Historical review	6
2.1.1 Taxonomy.....	6
2.1.2 Morphology	10
1.3 Microbiology of <i>Campylobacter</i>.....	11
1.3.1 Isolation.....	11
1.3.2 Identification.....	16
1.3.2.1 Phenotypic methods.....	18
1.3.2.1.1 Biotyping	18
1.3.2.1.1.1 Hippurate hydrolysis test.....	19
1.3.2.1.1.2 Catalase test	19
1.3.2.1.2 Phage typing.....	19
1.3.2.1.3 Serotyping... ..	20
1.3.2.2 General genetic techniques	21
1.3.2.2.1 Plasmid analysis	21
1.3.2.2.2 Restriction endonuclease analysis.....	22

	Page
1.3.2.3 Molecular genetic techniques.....	23
1.3.2.3.1 Hybridization methods	23
1.3.2.3.1.1 DNA-DNA hybridisation	23
1.3.2.3.1.2 Ribotyping	23
1.3.2.3.2 Micro-restriction enzyme analysis	24
1.3.2.3.2.1 Pulsed-field gel electrophoresis	24
1.3.2.3.3 Polymerase chain reaction	26
1.4 Epidemiology of <i>Campylobacter</i>.	29
1.4.1 Human campylobacteriosis	30
1.4.2 Cattle	32
1.4.3 Milk	35
1.4.4 Water	37
1.4.5 Deer	37
1.4.6 Sheep and Goats.....	38
1.4.7 Pigs	39
1.4.8 Poultry	40
1.4.9 Dogs and Cats.....	42
1.4.10 Rabbits.....	44
1.4.11 Monkeys	44
1.4.12 Wild birds	45
1.4.13 Rodents.....	46
1.4.14 Flies	48
1.5 Aims and objectives	49
 CHAPTER TWO: MATERIALS AND METHODS	 50
2.1 Project sites	50
2.1.1 No.4 Dairy Farm, Massey University	50
2.1.2 The Square, Palmerston North.....	51

	Page
2.2 Specimen collection.....	52
2.2.1 Dairy cows.....	52
2.2.2 Sparrows.....	53
2.2.3 Rodents.....	55
2.2.4 Flies.....	55
2.2.5 Other animals.....	56
2.2.6 Other samples	56
2.3 Culture and identification of campylobacters.....	57
2.3.1 Culture of campylobacters.....	57
2.3.2 Identification of campylobacters	59
2.3.2.1 Presumptive identification of campylobacters	59
2.3.2.1.1 Gram stain.....	59
2.3.2.1.2 Oxidase test.....	59
2.3.2.1.3 Catalase activity	60
2.3.2.2 Confirmative identification of campylobacters.....	60
2.3.2.2.1 Nitrate reduction test	60
2.3.2.2.2 Sensitivity to antibiotics	61
2.3.2.2.3 Hippurate hydrolysis test	61
2.4 Storage of isolates	62
2.5 Pulsed-field gel electrophoresis of <i>Campylobacter</i>.....	63
2.5.1 Plug preparation – day 1.....	63
2.5.2 Plug washing – day 2	64
2.5.3 Restriction endonuclease digestion with <i>Sma</i> I – day 3	64
2.5.4 Gel running for pulsed-field gel electrophoresis – day 4	65
2.5.5 Staining and photographing the gel – day 5	66

	Page
CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS	67
3.1 Isolation of <i>Campylobacter spp</i> from dairy cows, sparrows, rodents and flies.....	67
3.2 Isolation of <i>Campylobacter spp</i> from urban sparrows	69
3.3 Descriptive statistics study	69
3.3.1 Prevalence	69
3.3.1.1 Prevalence of <i>C. jejuni</i> in dairy cows, sparrows, rodents and flies on the farm	69
3.3.1.2 Prevalence of <i>C. jejuni</i> in farm and urban sparrows.....	70
3.3.2 Confidence intervals	71
3.4 Pulsed-field gel electrophoresis	73
3.4.1 Pulsed-field gel electrophoresis on <i>C. jejuni</i> isolates.....	73
3.4.2 Analysis of common restriction patterns of <i>C. jejuni</i> isolates from different sources.....	79
3.4.3 On-farm comparisons of PFGE profiles of <i>C. jejuni</i> over time.....	82
 CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION / CONCLUSION.....	 84
DISCUSSION	84
CONCLUSION.....	89
APPENDIX I Preparation of Bolton’s broth	91
APPENDIX II Preparation of mCCDA.....	92
APPENDIX III Gram stain	93
APPENDIX IV Preparation of blood agar	94
APPENDIX V Preparation of nitrate broth (reagent).....	95
APPENDIX VI Preparation of ninhydrin reagent	96
APPENDIX VII Preparation of agarose and buffers	97
REFERENCES	100

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Chapter 1

- 1.1 Isolation rates of *Campylobacter* spp from diarrhoea specimens from children under five years of age in selected developing countries4
- 1.2 Differential characteristics of the species of the genus *Campylobacter* 17

Chapter 2

- 2.1 Gel running parameters.....65

Chapter 3

- 3.1 *Campylobacter* spp. isolation from farm and urban sources (5 April 2002 to 25 May 2002)68
- 3.2 Comparison of *Campylobacter* carriage by cows sampled in the present study and in the study by Wu (2002).....69
- 3.3 Calculation of 95% confidence intervals for the prevalence of *C. jejuni* in different populations 72
- 3.4 PFGE restriction patterns and the subtype diversity index of *C. jejuni* from different sources76
- 3.5 Percentage *C. jejuni* from different sources having PFGE patterns indistinguishable from cattle.....79
- 3.6 Indistinguishable PFGE patterns of *C. jejuni* isolates in the present study and the study by Wu (2001) on the same farm and their sources83

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Chapter 1

- 1.1 Illustration of the processes of polymerase chain reaction 27

Chapter 2

- 2.1 Site location of each section at No. 4 dairy farm, Massey University 51
- 2.2 The Square study site, Palmerston North city..... 52
- 2.3 Thirty-six-bale rotary milking shed at No. 4 dairy, Massey University..... 53
- 2.4A Sample collection technique used for sparrows in the Massey No. 4 dairy farm .54
- 2.4B Sample collection techniques used for sparrows in the city 54
- 2.5 Rodents trapped in standard spring-loaded rat trap..... 55
- 2.6 Silage used as supplementary feed on No. 4 dairy farm during the time of grass scarcity 56
- 2.7 Drinking water trough in a paddock in No. 4 dairy farm 57
- 2.8 Flow diagram of procedures for *Campylobacter* spp isolation, identification and storage 58
- 2.9A *C. jejuni* colonial morphology on selective mCCDA..... 59
- 2.9B *C. jejuni* colonial morphology on non-selective blood agar 59
- 2.10 A colour change from yellow to pink/red indicates the organism reduces nitrates to nitrites 60
- 2.11 Antibiotic sensitivity test using nalidixic acid disc (NA30) and cephalothin disc (C30) in blood agar..... 61
- 2.12 A deep purple, crystal violet-like colour indicates the presence of glycine from the hydrolysis of hippurate by *C. jejuni*..... 62

Chapter 3

3.1	Prevalence of <i>C. jejuni</i> in farm sources	67
3.2	Prevalence of <i>C. jejuni</i> in urban and farm sparrows.....	70
3.3	<i>Sma</i> I pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) restriction patterns of 22 isolates of <i>C. jejuni</i> genomic DNA	73
3.4	<i>Sma</i> I PFGE restriction patterns of 25 isolates of <i>C. jejuni</i> genomic DNA.....	74
3.5	<i>Sma</i> I PFGE restriction patterns of 20 isolates of <i>C. jejuni</i> genomic DNA.....	75
3.6	Dendrogram of similarity between 61 <i>C. jejuni</i> PFGE patterns	80
3.7	Dendrogram of similarity between PFGE patterns of 47 <i>C. jejuni</i> genomic DNA determined by the UPGMA cluster analysis diversity database.....	82
3.8	Dendrogram comparing PFGE restriction patterns of <i>C. jejuni</i> genomic DNA in the present study and an earlier study on the same farm (Wu, 2001)	83

Chapter 4

4.1	Potential transmission routes of <i>Campylobacter</i>	86
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BHI	Brain heart infusion
BRENDA	Bacterial restriction endonuclease DNA analysis
BS	Butzler selective
BU	Butzler
Campy-BAP	Campy brucella agar
CBFS	<i>Campylobacter</i> blood-free selective
CCD	Charcoal-cefazolin-sodium deoxycholate
CS	Charcoal-based selective
CVA	Campylobacter-cefoperazone-vancomycin-amphotericin
EDTA	Ethylenediamine tetra-acetic acid
GB	Guillain-Barré
Kb	Kilobase
Mb	Megabase
MBU	Modified Butzler
mCCD	modified charcoal-cefoperazone-deoxycholate
mCCDA	modified charcoal-cefoperazone-deoxycholate agar
MF	Miller-Fisher
MPN	Most probable number
MQ	Milli – Q
NARTC	Nalidixic-acid-resistant thermophilic <i>Campylobacter</i>
OD	Optical density
PR	Preston
REA	Restriction endonuclease analysis
rpm	Revolutions per minute
SK	Skirrow
TBE	Tris-Borate-EDTA
TE	Tris-EDTA
WHO	World Health Organisation