

Poster 378. *Brucella melitensis* Outbreak in Minnesota Associated with Unpasteurized Soft Cheese Brought Back by a Traveler Returning from Mexico M. Bye¹, K. Smith¹, J. Scheftel¹, M. Sullivan², L. Magnuson¹, S. Wang², M. Ireland¹, C. Medus¹ ¹ Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention, and Control Division, Minnesota Department of Health, St. Paul, MN, USA, ² Minnesota Department of Health Public Health Laboratory, St. Paul, MN, USA

Background: Brucellosis is caused by direct contact with or consumption of products from infected animals. Each year, 0 – 5 Minnesotans acquire brucellosis, most often during foreign travel. In June 2021, three brucellosis cases who reported eating unpasteurized cheese from Mexico were reported to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). **Methods:** MDH conducts passive surveillance for brucellosis, including medical chart abstraction and patient interview. Suspect clinical isolates must be sent to MDH for confirmation and identification to species. A case was defined as a Minnesota resident with a lab-confirmed *B. melitensis* infection who reported eating locally acquired cheese from Mexico. Cases were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. A sample of the cheese was obtained from a case for testing. **Results:** Eleven outbreak cases were identified. The median age of cases was 44 years (range, 16-52 years), 7 (64%) were male, and all were Hispanic. Nine cases were interviewed by a native Spanish-speaking MDH staff member. Cases reported purchasing or being gifted an unpasteurized homemade queso fresco, likely made with goat milk, from an individual who brought it from Guanajuato, Mexico. Cheese was purchased and consumed from May through July 2021. Cases reported illness onsets from late May through September 11, 2021. All cases reported fever, 7(70%) headache, 7(70%) lack of appetite, and 6(60%) muscle aches. Ten (91%) cases were hospitalized, for a median of 7 days (range, 1-13 days). Cases experienced severe complications including endocarditis (n=3), sepsis (n=3), splenomegaly (n=1), and hepatitis (n=1). Post-exposure prophylaxis and 6 months of symptom and serologic monitoring was recommended for asymptomatic cheese consumers. Cases were given letters to distribute to acquaintances who may have eaten the cheese, encouraging them to seek care. On July 1, a health alert was issued to notify local healthcare providers of the outbreak. The cheese sample was PCR-positive at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture lab; *B. melitensis* was cultureconfirmed from the cheese at MDH. **Conclusions:** Unpasteurized cheese brought from other countries can cause locally acquired brucellosis. Clinicians should consider brucellosis in patients with compatible symptoms even without a relevant travel history.

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<http://www.cdc.gov/EID/pdfs/ICEID2022.pdf>