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Title: Prevalence of *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* in small rodents in France

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- 18
- 19 Abstract
- 20 Anaplasma phagocytophilum is an emerging zoonotic tick-borne pathogen affecting a wide range of
- 21 mammals. Rodents are suspected to be natural reservoirs for this bacterium, but their role in the
- 22 epidemiologic cycles affecting domestic animals and wild ungulates has not been demonstrated. This
- 23 study aimed to improve our knowledge on *A. phagocytophilum* prevalence in *Apodemus sylvaticus*,
- 24 A. flavicollis and Myodes glareolus using data collected in 2010 in one area in eastern France and in
- 25 2012-2013 in two others areas in western France. Rodents were captured in each site and infection
- 26 was tested using qualitative real-time PCR assays on either blood or spleen samples. Prevalence
- 27 showed high variability among sites. The highest prevalence was observed in the most eastern site
- 28 (with an average infection rate of 22.8% across all species), whereas no rodent was found to be PCR
- 29 positive in the south-west site and only 6.6% were positive in the north-west of France. Finally, a
- 30 significant increase in prevalence was observed in autumn samples compared to spring samples in
- 31 the north-west, but no change was found in the other two sites.
- 32
- 33 Keywords
- 34 Tick-borne disease; *Anaplasma*; rodent; prevalence; France

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