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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-55381

Title: "Group A Streptococcus in Household Dogs: Zoonotic Risk Assessment and Case-Based Insights"

Recommendation:

✓ Accept as it is .....
Accept after minor revision.....
Accept after major revision .....
Do not accept (*Reasons below*) .....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Dr S. K. Nath **Date:** 22.12.25

Detailed Reviewer's Report

Strengths of the Paper

- **Clear Identification of a Knowledge Gap** The study addresses a relevant and under-explored question regarding the potential for household dogs to serve as reservoirs for GAS, with implications for clinical management and guideline development.
- **Large Sample Size and Geographic Diversity** The inclusion of 201 dogs from multiple states across the United States enhances the generalizability of the findings.
- **Use of Modern Diagnostic Tools** Application of highly specific rapid antigen detection tests (RADTs) and corroboration with culture enhances the reliability of the microbiological assessments.
- **Comprehensive Data Collection** The combination of clinical testing with detailed owner surveys provides valuable contextual information about household and dog health, social behavior, and potential risk factors.
- **Well-Structured Presentation** The manuscript is logically organized, with clear descriptions of the introduction, methodology, results, and discussion, which facilitates reader understanding.

Weaknesses of the Paper

- **Limited Sensitivity of Diagnostic Methodology** Reliance solely on RADTs, which are less sensitive than molecular methods like PCR, could potentially lead to false negatives, especially in asymptomatic animals.
- **Absence of Molecular Analyses** The study does not incorporate molecular or culture-based methods to confirm GAS colonization, which could provide more definitive results.
- **Cross-Sectional Design Limitations** A single time-point sampling does not capture transient carriage or colonization dynamics over time and limits causal inference.
- **Potential Selection Bias** Dogs sampled at veterinary clinics, parks, and daycares may not fully represent the general dog population or households with high recurrent GAS infection risk.
- **Insufficient Exploration of Symptom Correlation** While owner-reported symptoms were collected, the low symptom prevalence limits inferences about clinical correlates of GAS carriage.

Reviewer Comments

- **Ethical Clearance Status:** The paper states that the study was reviewed and exempted from institutional board approval due to its observational and non-invasive nature. It would be helpful to explicitly mention whether ethical approval or exemption was obtained from an Institutional Review Board or equivalent ethical committee to strengthen compliance transparency.

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- **Methodology Issues:** The use of RADTs alone might not be sufficient to detect asymptomatic carriage. Incorporating molecular methods could increase sensitivity. Additionally, details regarding the timing of sample collection, sample storage conditions, and swabbing technique standardization should be clarified.
- **Typographical Mistakes:** There are no prominent typographical errors; however, minor editing for consistency in formatting (e.g., capitalization, spacing) can improve readability.
- **Grammar and English Language Quality:** The manuscript overall maintains good language quality. Minor grammatical improvements can be made for flow but do not significantly detract from clarity.
- **Formatting Issues:** Figures and tables are referenced but not embedded within the document provided. Ensuring all figures are appropriately placed and labeled with clear captions will enhance readability.
- **Clarity of Objectives, Results, and Conclusion:** The objectives are clearly stated, and the results are straightforward with no positive GAS detected. The conclusion succinctly supports the current guidelines, although it could emphasize the limitations directly linked to methodology to frame the findings more cautiously.
- **Adequacy of References:** References are appropriate, current, and relevant. It may be beneficial to include recent studies on molecular detection of GAS in animals to support future research directions.
- **Missing or Incomplete Information:** Details about the swabbing technique standardization, sample handling, and test validation procedures are limited. Including this information would bolster reproducibility and reliability assessments.