

1 *Vibrio cholerae* may be transmitted to humans from bullfrog 2 through food or water

3
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13

14 **Abstract:** Bullfrog is one of the most important economic aquatic animals in China. It is widely
15 cultured in southern China, and is a key breed recommended as an industry of poverty alleviation
16 in China. During recent years, a fatal bacterial disease has often been found in cultured bullfrogs.
17 The clinical manifestations of the diseased bullfrogs were severe intestinal inflammation and even
18 anal prolapse. A bacterial pathogen was isolated from the diseased bullfrog intestines. The
19 bacterium was identified as *Vibrio cholerae* using morphological, biochemical and 16S rRNA
20 phylogenetic analysis. In this study, *V. cholerae* was isolated and identified from diseased bullfrogs
21 for the first time, providing a basis for the diagnosis and control of the disease. At the same time, it
22 was also found that *V. cholerae* may be transmitted to humans from bullfrogs through bullfrog food
23 and aquaculture water, creating a serious threat for human health. Therefore, society should pay
24 attention to the modes of transmission of *Vibrio cholerae* from bullfrog and formulate reasonable

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25 safety measures to avoid disasters.

26 **Keywords:** *Vibrio cholerae*; Bullfrog; Food safety; Fatal threat; Route of transmission

27

28 1. Introduction

29 Bullfrog belongs to the Ranae and Rana, family and genus, respectively, of the order Anura
30 and class Amphibia of the phylum Chordata. It is the most popular large edible frog in the world. It
31 is named based on the loud sound and its resemblance to the noise made by cattle (Gao, 2016). The
32 original distribution of the Bullfrog is to the east of the Rocky Mountains in the United States, 30°
33 to 40° north latitude area and southern Ontario and Quebec in Canada. It is the largest frog found in
34 North America (Nori, Urbina-Cardona, Loyola, Lescano & Leynaud, 2011). The adult frog is
35 generally 8-12 cm in length and can reach a maximum weight of 2 kg. Although bullfrogs are about
36 300 million years old, its artificial culture spans only about a hundred years. Due to its delicious
37 taste, high protein content, low fat and low cholesterol content, its skin, oil, hormone, gland and bile
38 are of economic value, and are used as important raw materials in aquaculture, medicine and other
39 industries (Gao, 2016). Therefore, bullfrog has been favored by many consumers since it was first
40 introduced into China from Cuba in 1959 (Ding et al., 2020). It is one of the main economically
41 valuable aquaculture animals in China. At present, bullfrog breeding is mainly distributed in
42 Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hainan, Anhui, Jiangsu, Hunan, Hubei, Sichuan and other
43 southern regions (Gao, 2016).

44 During the raring process of bullfrogs, various techniques are used by farmers to improve yield,
45 and little attention has been paid to the carrying capacity of the waterbodies, increasing the
46 seriousness of diseases year by year along with the increase in breeding density. Along with the
47 continuous increase of the scale and density of bullfrog breeding, many problems, such as the
48 shortage of biologically healthy food, the degradation of germplasm resources, the deterioration of
49 the breeding environment, and a lack of breeding technology, have emerged. The diseases
50 encountered during bullfrog breeding are on the rise and are becoming increasingly more
51 detrimental, with large-scale outbreaks occurring from time to time, which has seriously hindered
52 the development of the industry. At present, the main pathogens of bullfrog diseases are bacteria,
53 viruses, and parasites (Ding et al., 2020; Pu et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2013). Due to the characteristics
54 of many types of pathogens, complex and diverse causes, rapid spread and high mortality, bacterial

55 diseases are the most harmful to the bullfrog breeding industry, and have become the focus of
56 prevention and control during the process of bullfrog breeding (Yu et al., 2013).

57 During recent years, a strange disease has often broken out in bullfrog farms in the Zhangzhou
58 area of Fujian Province, which is commonly known as anorectal disease by local farmers. The main
59 clinical symptoms of diseased bullfrogs are anal abscission, rotten feces, signs of severe dyspepsia,
60 which has been confirmed as severe enteritis through diagnosis. To find out the cause of the disease
61 in bullfrogs as soon as possible, and to formulate prevention and control measures, the etiology of
62 the disease was studied in bullfrogs with typical symptoms. Through bacteriological studies, several
63 dominant strains were isolated from different batches of samples. Further studies found that the
64 dominant bacteria in most samples was the same based on morphology and dominance. According
65 to Koch criterion, the pathogenicity of the bacteria isolated bullfrog was studied. The results showed
66 that the isolated strain was a pathogen of bullfrog that could also cause fatal diseases in humans. In
67 history, the isolates have caused epidemics that have resulted in hundreds of millions of human
68 deaths. The results of this study provide important methods for the diagnosis and control of this
69 emerging disease in bullfrog and warn that there may be fatal risks associated with the human
70 consumption of bullfrog products or contact with water used for breeding bullfrog.

71 **2. Materials and methods**

72 **2.1 Sampling**

73 Bullfrogs with typical symptoms were collected multiple times from Zhangzhou, Fujian
74 Province. The diseased bullfrogs with typical symptoms were put in net bags and brought back to
75 the laboratory for diagnosis and pathogen isolation. Bullfrogs (50 ± 2 g) were purchased for
76 infection experiments from farms without a history of disease. The purchased bullfrogs showed a
77 strong jumping ability with no scars on their bodies. The healthy bullfrogs were kept in buckets for
78 7 days, and the water used for breeding was not higher than the neck of the frogs. Seven days later,
79 bullfrogs were used in infection tests if they seemed to be normal.

80 **2.2 Pathogen isolation**

81 A light microscope was used to observe the intestinal tract to identify typical symptoms of
82 parasitic or fungi infections. Bacterial isolation was performed in a secondary biosafety cabinet
83 (ESCO, Singapore). The anesthetized bullfrogs were placed on ice and disinfected with 75% ethanol
84 before dissection. After the intestinal and visceral tissues of each bullfrog were allowed contact with

85 the inoculation ring, the inoculation ring was crossed on the agar plate of the brain heart extract
86 (BHI; Difco, USA), and the plate was cultured at 28°C for 24 h. The dominant strain was selected
87 and then purified. The purified strain was temporarily named NW01. The purified strain was mixed
88 with 15% glycerol and frozen at -80°C as a standby.

89 **2.3 Biochemical characterization of bacterial isolates**

90 The isolate NW01 was inoculated on agar medium plates with brain heart extract and cultured
91 at 28°C for 24 hours. The isolated strains were stained using gram, and the physicochemical indexes
92 of the isolated strains were determined through micro biochemical identification based on the
93 manual for the identification of common bacterial systems (Dong & Cai, 2001).

94 **2.4 16S ribosomal RNA sequencing analysis of the isolates**

95 The isolated strains were inoculated into agar medium plates with brain heart extract and
96 cultured at 28°C for 18 h. A single colony was selected and placed in 10 µL of sterile water, and
97 then it was blown evenly to be used as a template for PCR.

98 The universal primers used for 16S rRNA were 27F: 5'- agagtttgatc (c/a) tggctcag-3', and
99 1492R: 5'- gggtacctgttaccgatt-3' (Polz & Cavanaugh, 1998). PCR reaction system: 50 µL of 2 × Taq
100 PCR mix, 47 µL of ddH₂O, 1 µL of upstream and downstream primers, and 1 µL of the template.
101 Reaction conditions: 35 cycles of denaturation at 95°C for 1 min, equilibrium at 98°C for 15 s,
102 annealing at 55°C for 30 s, extension at 72°C for 2 min, followed by incubation at 72 °C for 10 min.
103 The amplified product was verified using 1% agarose gel electrophoresis as the target fragment size
104 and then sent to Shanghai bioengineering for purification and sequencing. The 16S rRNA gene
105 sequence of the NW01 strain was added into NCBI for comparison. The 16S rRNA sequences of
106 *Vibrio* and important aquatic pathogens were selected and analyzed using cluster x software. The
107 phylogenetic tree was constructed using the neighbor joining method using mega 6.0 software and
108 the confidence interval of the bootstrapping was 10,000 times.

109 **2.5 Pathogenicity**

110 According to Koch's rule, the regression infection experiment was designed to determine
111 whether the isolate was pathogenic to bullfrogs, to confirm whether the isolate was the pathogen
112 that caused disease in bullfrogs. The isolated strains were cultured in brain heart extract medium at
113 28°C for 18 h. The bacteria (sigma, 3k15) were collected at 4000 rpm for 5 minutes at 4°C, and then
114 the bacterial mass was resuspended in a sterile PBS buffer. The concentration of the bacterial

115 suspension was adjusted to about 10^4 , 10^6 and 10^8 CFU/mL. One hundred and twenty healthy
116 bullfrogs were randomly divided into four groups (A, B, C and D) with 30 in each group. Group A,
117 B and C were used as the experimental groups, while group D was used as the control group. The
118 bullfrogs in group A-C were intraperitoneally injected with 0.1 mL of the bacterial suspension, and
119 the concentrations of the bacterial suspensions used were 10^8 , 10^6 and 10^4 CFU/mL respectively,
120 that is that the injection doses were 10^7 , 10^5 and 10^3 CFU/frog, while the bullfrogs in group D were
121 injected with the same dose of PBS at the same site. During the experiment, the air temperature was
122 controlled at 24-26°C and ventilation was kept constant. Fully aerated tap water was used for
123 breeding. The water used for breeding did not exceed the neck of the bullfrogs. Each bucket was
124 covered with a gray cover to prevent the frog from escaping. The water used for breeding was
125 changed every day. The state of the experimental bullfrogs were observed until death. Clinical
126 symptoms and mortality were recorded every day, and bacteria were isolated from the dying bullfrog
127 and purified. The purified bacteria were identified using 16S rRNA sequencing.

128 **2.6 Analysis of drug sensitivity of the NW01 strain**

129 A standard NCCLS antimicrobial susceptibility test was conducted using the paper diffusion
130 method to analyze the antimicrobial susceptibility of the isolates (CLSI, 2006). The isolate NW01
131 was inoculated into a nutrient broth and cultured at 28°C for 24 hours at 200 rpm. The bacterial
132 suspension was diluted with PBS to a concentration of 10^7 CFU/mL. 100 μ L of the bacteria
133 suspension was used to coat MH agar, and the selected drug sensitive paper was pasted on the plate.
134 The drug content of the paper is shown in the table. The plate was incubated at 28°C for 24 h, and
135 the size of the inhibition zone was measured.

136 **2.7 Serotype identification of the isolate**

137 The serotype of the isolated bacteria was identified based on the method used for the *Vibrio*
138 *cholerae* O antigen diagnostic serum. First, the suspension of bacteria to be tested was dripped onto
139 a clean slide, and then a single drop of *V. cholera* O1 group, O1 group Oryza type, O1 group Ogawa
140 type, O139 group diagnostic serum was dripped onto the suspension of bacteria to be tested, and
141 mixed evenly, and observed 1 min later. Meanwhile, physiological saline was used as the control.
142 Agglutination at 2 + or more was considered as a positive result.

143 **3. Results**

144 **3.1 The epidemic time and clinical symptoms of diseased bullfrog**

145 Epidemiological investigations showed that the disease affected the entire breeding cycle of
146 the bullfrogs, especially during the high temperature season. The increase in feeding intensity (Fig.
147 1A-C) made the intestinal tract of bullfrogs more prone to inflammation, leading to anal abscission
148 (Fig. 2). The diseased bullfrogs showed no obvious symptoms on the surface of their body.
149 Dissection showed that the diseased bullfrogs suffered slight congestion and swelling in its viscera,
150 severe intestinal inflammation, and rotten feces. Based on the symptoms, the disease was name as
151 bullfrog enteritis. The weight of the diseased bullfrogs ranged from 100 to 1000 g, and there were
152 no significant individual differences. During the investigation, the incidence rate of enteritis in
153 bullfrogs was high, but the mortality rate was not high, indicating a chronic disease. Enteritis can
154 lead to indigestion, malnutrition, and intestinal mucosa damage of the bullfrog, which makes it
155 easier for other pathogens, such as *Streptococcus* infection, to occur. In addition, enteritis can lead
156 to anal prolapse of bullfrogs, seriously affecting the appearance of commercial bullfrogs, resulting
157 in exceptionally large economic losses for farmers. No parasite or fungus infection was found in
158 bullfrogs as observed under a light microscope. After the bacteriological study, a strain of bacteria
159 was isolated and purified, and was temporarily named NW01.



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Figure 1. Cultivation and feed for bullfrog: A-C: cultivation; D-E: feed



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Figure. 2. A diseased bullfrog

166 3.2 Biochemical characterization and molecular identification of the bacteria

167 The result of Gram staining showed that the isolate NW01 was red, indicating that it was gram

168 negative. The specific physical and chemical characteristics of the bacteria are shown in Table 1.

169 The physical and chemical characteristics showed that NW01 was *Vibrio cholerae*. The 16S rRNA

170 gene of NW01 was amplified using universal primers, and the 16S rRNA fragment of NW01 was

171 about 1500 bp long, which is in line with the expected size. The 16S rRNA gene sequences

172 (GenBank accession number: MT126343) of the isolated strains were added into a gene library and

173 analyzed using the ncbi-blast program. The results showed that the isolates had the highest

174 homology with *V. cholerae*. The 16S rRNA gene sequences of several *Vibrio* species and important

175 aquatic pathogens were selected to construct a phylogenetic tree based on the 16S rRNA gene

176 sequences, as shown in figure 3. The results showed that the isolates and *V. cholerae* were clustered

177 into one branch. Therefore, the combination of physical and chemical characteristics and gene
178 analysis of the isolate confirmed that NW01 was *V. cholerae*.

179

180 Table 1 Physiological and biochemical characteristics of the NW01 strain

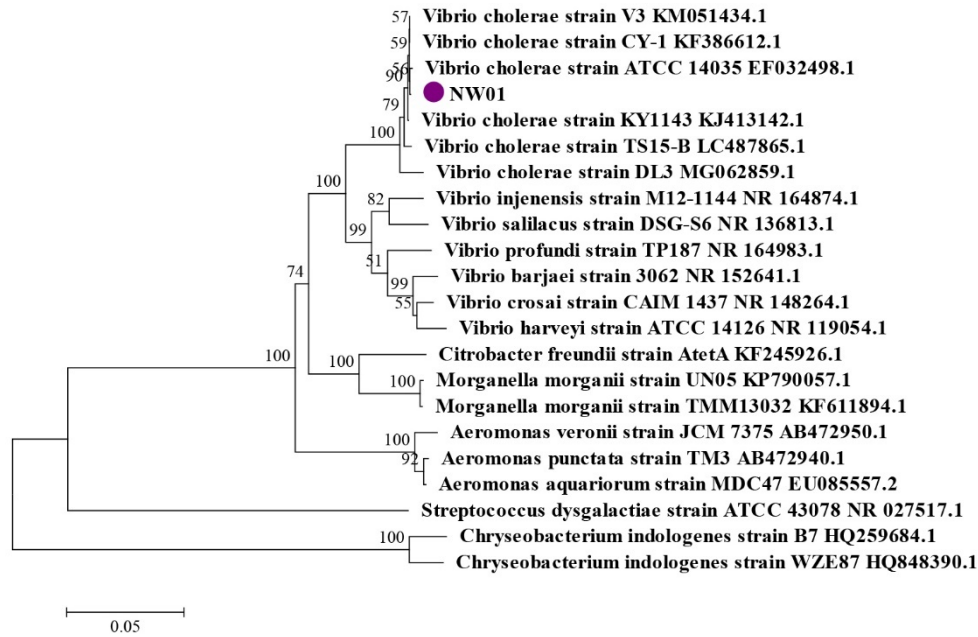
181

Measuring item	<i>V. cholerae</i>	NW01
Arginine dihydrolase	-	-
V - p reaction	+	+
Oxidase	+	+
Nitrate	+	+
D glucose gas production	-	-
Amylase	+	+
Gelatinase	+	+
Lipase	+	+
Chitinase	+	+
L-leucine	-	-
L-malate	+	+
Moveability	-	-
D-mannose	+	+
Propyl alcohol	-	-
Pyruvic acid	+	+
L-rhamnose	-	-
Salicin	-	-
D-ribose	+	+
D-sorbitol	-	-
D-xylose	-	-
Trehalose	+	+
L-tyrosine	-	-
Melibiose	-	-
L-ornithine	+	+
L-Proline	+	+

182

183 Note: +, positive; -, negative.

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Figure 3. The phylogenetic tree for the 16s rRNA sequence of NW01

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189 3.3 Pathogenicity

190 In the pathogenicity study of the isolate, the experimental groups all died to varying degrees

191 (Fig. 4). The mortality rates of group A, B and C were 100%, 80% and 23.33%, respectively. The

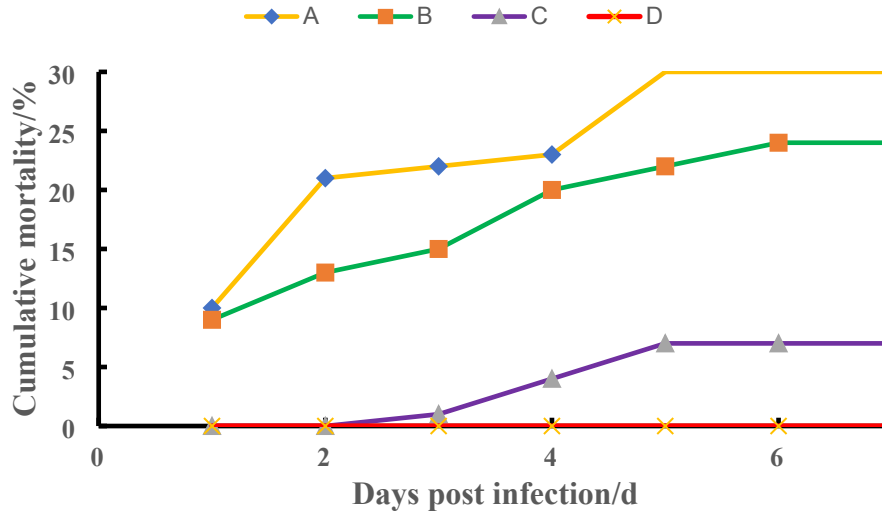
192 dead bullfrogs showed similar symptoms to natural disease, while bullfrogs in the control group did

193 not get sick or die. *V. cholerae* was isolated again from the dying bullfrogs. The infection experiment

194 was performed in accordance with Koch's law, and the results indicated that *V. cholerae* was the

195 pathogen that had caused bullfrog enteritis.

196



197

198 Figure 4. The pathogenicity of the healthy bullfrogs experimentally infected with 10⁷ (A), 10⁵ (B),

199 10³ (C) CFU/bullfrog doses of the isolated NW01 strain or 0.1 ml of PBS (D).

200

201 3.4 Drug sensitivity tests for the NW01 strain

202 The sensitivity of NW01 to 20 antibiotics was determined. The results showed that NW01 was

203 resistant to β - lactams, aminoglycosides, macrolides, tetracyclines and sulfonamides, but sensitive

204 to cephalosporins, quinolones and amido alcohols. Among the sensitive drugs, neomycin,

205 doxycycline and florfenicol are allowed to be used in aquaculture (Table 2). Therefore, neomycin

206 can be used for a course of 7 days to control the spread of the disease, but it cannot easily improve

207 bullfrog anal prolapse. Therefore, neomycin was selected to treat bullfrog enteritis. A

208

209 Table 2. Susceptibility of NW01 to antibiotics

210

Drug	The judgment standard of inhibition zone diameter (mm)			Dose (g/piece)	Inhibition zone diameter (mm)	
	Resistant	Intermediately sensitive	Sensitive			
	β -lactam	Penicillin	≤ 17			18—20
	Amoxicillin	≤ 13	14—17	≥ 18	20	0 ^R
Cephalosporin	Cefazolin oxime	≤ 14	15—19	≥ 20	30	30 \pm 0.19 ^S
	Cefradine	≤ 14	15—17	≥ 18	30	25 \pm 0.14 ^S
	Cefotaxime	≤ 14	15—22	≥ 23	30	22 \pm 0.10 ^I
	Gentamicin	≤ 12	13—14	≥ 15	10	10 \pm 0.21 ^R
Aminoglycosides	Streptomycin	≤ 11	12—14	≥ 15	10	9 \pm 0.11 ^R
	Netilmicin	≤ 12	13—14	≥ 15	30	13 \pm 0.17 ^I
	Kanamycin	≤ 13	14—17	≥ 18	30	19 \pm 0.12 ^S
	Tobramycin	≤ 12	13—14	≥ 15	10	10 \pm 0.18 ^R
	Neomycin*	≤ 12	13—16	≥ 17	30	20 \pm 0.22 ^S

Macrolides	Azithromycin	≤13	14—17	≥18	15	16±0.31 ^I
	Erythromycin	≤13	14—22	≥23	15	12±0.33 ^R
Tetracyclines	Tetracycline	≤18	19—22	≥23	30	18±0.14 ^R
	Doxycycline*	≤12	13—15	≥16	30	22±0.25 ^S
Quinolones	Enoxacin	≤14	15—17	≥18	10	25±0.18 ^S
	Norfloxacin	≤12	13—16	≥17	10	27±0.17 ^S
Amphenicols	Chloramphenicol	≤12	13—17	≥18	300	30±0.14 ^S
	Florfenicol*	≤12	13—17	≥18	75	28±0.19 ^S
Sulfonamides	Sulfamisoazole*	≤12	13—16	≥17	300	10±0.16 ^R

211

212 Note: Data are presented as mean ± standard deviation; S: Sensitive; I: Intermediately sensitive;
213 R: Resistant. *, Veterinary antibiotics used in aquaculture.

214 3.5 Serotype identification of the isolated bacteria

215 The O antigen slide agglutination test was used to determine that the isolated strain NW01 did
216 not agglutinate with the *V. cholerae* O1 group, O1 group rice leaf type, O1 group Ogawa type, or
217 O139 diagnostic serum, and the isolate was further identified as non-O1/non-O139 group *V.*
218 *cholerae*.

219 4 Discussion

220 The breeding of frogs has a long history in China. Frogs are bred not only as food, but also to
221 harvest a variety of industrial raw materials and provides good economic benefits. Bullfrog is an
222 important representative species (Zhang, 2015). Along with large developments in the bullfrog
223 breeding industry, diseases have began to occur more frequently during the process of breeding.
224 Due to largescale domestic bullfrog breeding, the reports of bullfrog diseases have been mainly
225 concentrated in China (Pu et al., 2019; Han et al., 2016), Overseas, only South Korea, France, North
226 America and a few other countries have reported of the same. The main pathogens of bullfrog
227 diseases include viruses, bacteria, and parasites (Candido et al., 2019; Jaý et al., 2020; Khalifa &
228 Bekhet, 2018; Kim, Koo, Park, Kwon, Park, & Ecology, 2016; Landsberg, Kiryu, Tabuchi, Waltzek,
229 & Pessier, 2013; Oliveira, Alfaia, Ikari, Tavares, & Ferreira, 2019). The frequent occurrence of
230 diseases in bullfrog has caused great economic losses, and diseases are becoming a major bottleneck
231 in the development of the bullfrog industry.

232 In this study, the dominant strain, NW01, was isolated from diseased bullfrogs. The isolate
233 NW01, was identified as *V. cholerae* through biochemical identification, 16S rRNA sequence
234 analysis and construction of a phylogenetic tree. The regression infection experiment confirmed that
235 *V. cholerae* was the pathogen that caused bullfrog enteritis. The results showed that *V. cholerae*, a
236 zoonotic bacterium, caused the first infection in the bullfrogs, which led to a great epidemic of

237 diseases and caused great economic losses.

238 Based on the sensitivity of the isolates to 20 types of antibiotics, neomycin was selected to be
239 used for clinical prevention and control in this study, and the spread of the epidemic was controlled
240 in time. However, it cannot induce a good therapeutic effect on bullfrog anal prolapse, as it is a
241 serious condition that is difficult to improve.

242 *V. cholerae* belongs to *Vibrio* family and can be divided into 139 serogroups. Among them,
243 O1 and O139 can cause cholera in humans. O1 group and O139 group can cause cholera mainly
244 because they carry the cholera toxin (Faruque, Albert, & Mekalanos, 1998; Sánchez & Holmgren,
245 2011), which can activate adenylate cyclase in intestinal epithelial cells, resulting in the secretion
246 of Cl⁻ ions and impairment of Na⁺ ion absorption. Water enters the intestinal cavity with ions,
247 causing severe watery diarrhea, which leads to human death. Cholera is an ancient and widespread
248 infectious disease that mainly manifests as severe vomiting, diarrhea, water loss, high mortality, and
249 is an international quarantine class A infectious disease. Since 1817, there have been seven cholera
250 pandemics worldwide, causing hundreds of millions of human deaths. However, non-O1 and non-
251 O139 *V. cholerae* may carry other virulence factors, which are widely distributed in the water
252 environment. They can usually cause human gastrointestinal inflammation and may sometimes
253 cause extraintestinal infections, such as meningitis, sepsis, and wound infections (Hounmanou et
254 al., 2016).

255 *V. cholerae* widely exists in all types of waterbodies (Daboul, Weghorst, Deangelis, Plecha, &
256 Matson, 2020; Hounmanou et al., 2016). It has been reported that *V. cholerae* can infect aquatic
257 animals. At present, it has been reported that *V. cholerae* can infect fish (Reddacliff, Hornitzky,
258 Carson, Petersen, & Zelski, 2010; Rehulka, Petras, Marejkova, & Aldova, 2015), shrimps (Li et al.,
259 2019; Zhou et al., 2020), and other aquaculture animals (López-Hernández et al., 2015; Kawai, Ota,
260 Takemura, Nakai, & Maruyama, 2020). The cause of cholera epidemics are extraordinarily complex,
261 and it is unclear how it spreads, while the reason for seasonal epidemic peaks in epidemic areas are
262 also unknown. However, it is an indisputable fact that cholera is caused by *V. cholerae* (Byun, Jung,
263 Chen, Larios Valencia, & Zhu, 2020).

264 Since the transmission mechanism of *V. cholerae* is not clear, it has been thought that aquatic
265 animals are infected with non-O1 and non-O139 *V. cholerae*. The *V. cholerae* isolated from
266 bullfrogs were also of the non-O1 group and non-O139 group, which can cause symptoms of

267 intestinal inflammation and even anal prolapse, results in low mortality and a long duration of
268 survival, but a high incidence rate.

269 However, further research has shown that the O1 group and O139 group of *V. cholerae* have
270 been reported in aquatic animals, such as reports of O1 group found in tilapia (Hounmanou et al.,
271 2019) and O139 group found in loach and shrimp (Joseph, Murugadas, Reghunathan, Shaheer,
272 Akhlnath, & Lalitha, 2015; Chen et al., 2016). These reports indicate that *V. cholerae* in aquatic
273 animals is not all non-O1 group and non-O139 group, but may also be O1 group and O139 group,
274 which can cause cholera outbreaks. Therefore, it is obvious that *V. cholerae* is an important zoonotic
275 bacterium. Although there are no reports of human cholera outbreaks caused by O1 and O139 from
276 aquatic animals, it is unknown whether such cholera outbreaks will occur in the future. As an open
277 community similar to that of wild animals, aquatic animals are likely to serve as the resource
278 repository for zoonotic bacteria, such as *V. cholerae*. Further attention needs to be paid to determine
279 whether the pathogen can spread, mutate and evolve among aquatic animals.

280 According to the author's unpublished paper, *V. cholerae* from aquatic animals may spread
281 through birds, aquatic products (food) and aquaculture water. At present, there are many methods
282 in which bullfrogs are used as food, among which hot pot bullfrogs and barbecued bullfrogs are the
283 two main ways, and the bullfrogs prepared using these methods may be eaten without being fully
284 cooked (Fig. 1D-F). In addition, there are health risks and cross infection risks in Chinese restaurants.
285 At present, on one hand, there is no systematic policy for the detection of pathogenic
286 microorganisms in aquatic products in China, and there are also some loopholes. On the other hand,
287 to reduce economic losses, sick bullfrogs are sold at a lower price. These results indicate that
288 bullfrogs are likely to be infected with *V. cholerae* through aquatic products. Other studies have
289 found *Salmonella* and microsporidia in bullfrogs, which are also serious zoonotic pathogens (Ding
290 et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2015). Therefore this series of findings is worthy of attention.

291 Bullfrogs belongs are amphibian but water should not cover its neck during the process of
292 breeding, therefore bullfrog pools contain only a small amount of water. Bullfrogs eat a lot and
293 discharge a lot of feces and urine. Therefore, the water used for breeding bullfrogs is often black,
294 with a foul smell. The ammonia nitrogen index is often dozens of times higher than that which
295 should be used for breeding, and is full of organic matter. These observations show that the
296 aquaculture water and living environment of bullfrog provides rich nutrition for the reproduction of

297 *V. cholerae*. Therefore, the water used in bullfrog breeding is likely to act as a culture medium of
298 *V. cholerae* and becomes the mother liquor of *V. cholerae*. The mother liquor is directly discharged
299 into natural waterbodies without treatment and can permeate drinking water sources, resulting in
300 severely detrimental consequences.

301 Although only non-O1 and non-O139 *V. cholerae* were found in bullfrogs in this study, it is
302 possible that *V. cholerae* can become O1 and O139 serotypes through gene transfer under the current
303 open culture practice of bullfrogs (Bai, Ke, Consuegra, Liu, & Li, 2012), with further enhanced risk.
304 Bullfrog is also a biologically invasive species in China and has a strong survival ability in the wild,
305 resulting in the further spread and variation of the pathogen. Chinese people have always been fond
306 of eating wild animals, which also provides an important method for the spread of pathogens.
307 Therefore, the author calls for the strengthening of the monitoring of *V. cholerae* and other zoonotic
308 pathogens in edible bullfrogs to ensure the quality and safety of bullfrog aquatic products. At the
309 same time, bullfrog breeding wastewater should be treated to a great extent to avoid *V. cholerae*
310 pollution of natural waterways, which will lead to human health concerns and fatalities.

311

312

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317 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

318 The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal
319 relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

320 **ETHICAL APPROVAL**

321 The authors confirm that the ethical policies of the journal, as noted on the journal's author
322 guidelines page, have been adhered to. No ethical approval was required as human or animal
323 subjects were not involved in this study.

324 **DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

325 All data generated or used during the study appear in the submitted article.

326

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