

# **The role of FTL\_0893 during Erythrocyte Invasion by *Francisella tularensis***

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*Francisella tularensis* is a highly virulent Gram-negative bacterium, and the causative agent of the disease, tularemia. During infection, this bacterium inhabits numerous cell types of its mammalian host including phagocytes of the immune system and erythrocytes – cells incapable of endocytosis. We previously determined that several *F. tularensis* genes upregulated in the presence of erythrocytes were also important for invasion of these host cells. Another such upregulated gene, FTL\_0893, has not yet been tested for its involvement in erythrocyte invasion. In this current study, we sought to generate both a disruption and deletion mutation of FTL\_0893. These mutant strains are currently being tested for their ability to invade erythrocytes. We are also investigating the contribution of FTL\_0893 in the virulence of *F. tularensis* using various in vitro and in vivo infection models.