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"Transforming food systems:

A new era for VPH!"

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CONTENTS

Lecture abstracts

Animal and Veterinary Public Health challenges in the Circular Economy Arjan Stegeman	6
Wildlife Diseases and their Threat to Food Safety	8
Charalambos Billinis, George Valiakos	
Beyond social responsibility and sustainability: creation of integrated value and its implementation through management systems approach S. B. Ramantanis	9
Innovative Non-Thermal Food-Processing Technologies and Food Safety Alexander Govaris	12
Poster abstracts	
Washing of hunted wild boar carcasses as a consumer health risk practice:	14
How often is it used by hunters?	
Ana Carolina Abrantes and Madalena Vieira-Pinto	
Bovine Tuberculosis - analysis of 10-year cases and impact of visual	15
inspection in slaughterhouse surveillance in Portugal	
Susana Gonçalves, Margarida Fonseca Cardoso, Madalena Vieira-Pinto, Eduarda Gomes-Neves	
COVID-19 impact on animal shelter management in Portugal	16
Eduarda Gomes-Neves, Sara Marques, Adélia Alves-Pereira, Pedro Osório,Alexandra Müller, Cláudia Baptista	
Competence of main Rift Valley Fever vectors in the Mediterranean basin: a	17
meta-analysis	
Alex DROUIN, Thomas BALENGHIEN, Véronique CHEVALIER, Benoit DURAND	
A European survey on post-mortem inspection of finishing pigs: judgement	18
criteria to declare fresh meat unfit for human consumption	
Madalena Vieira-Pinto, Susana Santos, Sergio Ghidini, Lis Alban, Diana Meemken ⁵ ,	
Patric Maurer, Nina Langkabel, Jaime Gómez Laguna, Boris Antunovic, Bojan	
Blagojevic, Silvia Bonardi, Ole Alvseike, Riikka Laukkanen-Ninios	19
Comparative study of traumatic injuries observed during the post mortem inspection of free-ranged chickens and broiler	19
Maria Beatriz Remoaldo, Alice Cardoso, Elisete Correia, Madalena Vieira-Pinto	
Evaluation of animal welfare indicators in turkeys (<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>) at	20
the slaughterhouse	20
Carolina Figueiredo Joanna Marchewka Inma Estevez and Madalena Vieira-Pinto	
Antimicrobial effect of cold atmospheric plasma jet treatment on stainless	21
steel cutting tool surfaces	
Thiemo Albert, Anna Joana Dittrich, Antje Lehmann, Thomas Arnold, Peggy G. Braun	
Modernizing official controls at the slaughterhouse: development of a	22
scoring tool for the risk of non-compliance with animal welfare regulations	
Morgane Salines, Thomas Sundermann, Nicolas Holleville	
Drivers of poultry products consumption in India	23
Lavinia Scudiero, Mehroosh Tak	

Microbiological evaluation of ready-to-eat meals prepared in canteens: a	24
preliminary study	
Ana Cristina Aires, Daniel Moreira, Carla Gonçalves, Maria da Conceição Fontes,	
Cristina Saraiva	
Microbiological evaluation of food contact surfaces in food establishments: a	25
study in one university Campus	
Daniel Moreira, Ana Cristina Aires, Carla Gonçalves, Cristina Saraiva, Maria da	
Conceição Fontes	
Prevalence, phenotypic and genetic characterization of Yersinia	26
enterocolitica isolated from slaughtered pigs raised in different housing	
systems in Croatia	
Nevijo Zdolec, Marta Kiš, Snježana Kazazić, Dean Jankuloski, Bojan Blagojević, Marina	
Pavlak, Valerij Pažin	
Prerequisites programs and HACCP-based procedures implementation	27
approach in a local food redistribution center	
Maria Margarida Marques, Ana Rita Henriques	
Quantitative assessment of food waste in nursery homes and mitigation	28
measures implementation	
Katy Remini, Luís Lisboa, Ana Rita Henriques	
Determination of the minimal selective concentration (MSC) of	29
oxytetracycline in sterilised intestinal contents from pigs	
Pedro Henrique Imazaki, Bertille Voisin, Alain Bousquet-Mélou, Aude Ferran, Delphine	
Bibbal	
Assessing the use of chitosan and alginate based membranes with oregano	30
essential oil and olive oil on quality of beef following packaging	
Anestis Tsitsos, Eirini Chouliara, Alexandros Theodoridis, Georgios Arsenos, Ioannis	
Amvrosiadis, Vangelis Economou	
A global media analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on chicken	32
meat food systems: Key vulnerabilities and opportunities for building	
resilience	
Lorraine Chapot, Louise Whatford, Polly Compston, Mehroosh Tak, Soledad Cuevas,	
Maria Garza, Houda Bennani, Hassaan Bin Aslam, Mathew Hennessey, Georgina	
Limon, Kevin Queenan, Guillaume Fourni <mark>é</mark> , Nikolaos Dadios and Barbara Häsler	
Molecular characterisation of Giardia duodenalis from human and	33
companion animal sources in the United Kingdom	
Sarah Krumrie, Paul Capewell, Willie Weir	

Assessing the use of chitosan and alginate based membranes with oregano essential oil and olive oil on quality of beef following packaging

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Background. Edible coatings are used in food packaging to enhance quality and shelf life. Sodium alginate, chitosan and their emulsions with essential oils have the ability to form strong coatings in beef products, positively affecting their quality traits.

Objective. To evaluate the microbiological, chemical, and organoleptic properties of beef products, coated with chitosan and alginate-based emulsions with oregano or olive oil and stored with vacuum packaging.

Materials and Methods. Beef rump and thigh pieces were coated with 1.5% alginate or 1% chitosan films combined with oregano essential oil or olive oil and stored aerobically or under vacuum at 4°C. Microbiological (total mesophilic counts, total psychrophilic counts, lactic acid bacteria, *Brochothrix thermosphacta*), chemical (moisture, total fats, total proteins), texture and surface color evaluation were performed weekly for 21 days; evaluation of organoleptic properties was performed on the 21st day of storage. A two-way repeated measures ANOVA was performed to analyze the data.

Results. Chitosan and vacuum packaging significantly affected the total mesophilic and psychrophilic counts. Alginate-based emulsions positively affected the growth of bacterial populations. Chemical composition of the meat pieces varied from 69%-79.4% in moisture, 0.5%-8.4% in total fats and 19.1%-22.5% in total proteins. The surface colour of meat pieces coated with oregano oil film was darker compared to other treatments.

Discussion and Conclusion. Chitosan edible coatings in combination with oregano essential oil and vacuum packaging are effective in enhancing beef quality and shelf life. Sodium alginate edible coatings had non-significant effect on beef quality, possibly because of low antimicrobial activity of the coating.

Perspectives. Chitosan coatings can be used on other types of meat. Incorporation of probiotic cultures, especially in the alginate films, could further enhance the storage potential.

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