

**COMPARISON BETWEEN AMOUNTS OF *Escherichia coli* FROM CECAL CONTENT OF BROILER WITH AND WITHOUT PRE-SLAUGHTER FEED WITHDRAWAL**

*(COMPARAÇÃO ENTRE A QUANTIDADE DE Escherichia coli PRESENTE NO CECO DE FRANGOS DE CORTE COM E SEM JEJUM PRÉ-ABATE)*

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Pre-slaughter fasting is routinely used in broiler chicken farms in order to decrease bowel volume and reduce the likelihood of breakage during handling in the slaughterhouse, thus aiming to prevent carcass contamination by intestinal contents. The objective of this experiment was to test the efficiency of pre-slaughter fasting in populations of *Escherichia coli* present in the cecum of birds. *E. coli* was used in this experiment as an indicator microorganism so that one can predict what would happen with potentially pathogenic gram-negative microorganisms. We used 20 Cobb broilers, slaughtered at 42 days of age. The feed was withdrawn 12 hours before slaughter. Samples of cecal contents were collected from 10 birds per treatment (fasting and nonfasting) before slaughter and placed in 0.1% peptone water. Serial dilutions were made from this solution. The number of CFU/mL (colony forming units/mL of cecal content) was counted on plates containing Violet Red Bile Agar with MUG-BD (Difco) (APHA, 2001). For statistical analysis, data were transformed to  $y = \log(x)$ . Although the values found for the chickens subjected to fasting were lower ( $8.40 \pm 0.35$  CFU/mL) than for those fed normally ( $9.90 \pm 1.07$  CFU/mL), there was no statistical difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) between treatments. Thus, it can be concluded that fasting neither changed significantly in the amount of *E. coli* in the cecum nor decreased the risk of transmission of gram-negative pathogens possibly present in the cecum that can potentially come into contact with the carcass during processing in the slaughterhouse.

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