

## Natural alternatives to coccidiostats in rabbit nutrition

### Summary

In rabbit management, coccidiosis caused by *Eimeria* protozoa is a serious health, production and economic problem due to its widespread occurrence. According to Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on additives for use in animal nutrition, coccidiostats will be phased out of use by 31 December 2012. This has prompted a search for natural alternatives to coccidiostats, which could stop the progression of this disease. The aim of the study was to identify parasitic invasions in a herd of rabbits during and after the use of natural alternatives to common coccidiostatic drugs and to determine the effect of these alternatives on rabbit performance and meat quality. Different proportions of feed additives based on natural oregano and garlic oils, added to complete diets, had a positive effect on the weight gains of young rabbits during the study from 35 to 90 days of age. In all experimental groups, dressing percentage was higher than the values reported for New Zealand White rabbits, and the feed additives had no effect on the taste of meat samples evaluated. Properly formulated rations of the concentrates reduced the intensity of coccidial infections while protecting the animals against secondary bacterial and viral infections, which usually accompany coccidiosis and are a common cause of mortality. The present results suggest that the herb extracts can be successfully used in prophylaxis as natural alternatives to coccidiostats in feeds.

**KEY WORDS:** rabbit, coccidiostats, garlic, oregano