

THE EFFECT OF “BONVITAL“, A PROBIOTIC PRODUCT CONTAINING *ENTEROCOCCUS FAECIUM* ON THE FATTENING PERFORMANCE, CARCASS CHARACTERISTICS AND MEAT QUALITY OF PIGS UNDER PRODUCTION CONDITIONS

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Summary. Two performance trials with fattening pigs was conducted on Lithuanian agricultural farms. The objective of the study was to determine the effect of a probiotic product containing *Enterococcus faecium* (trade name “Bonvital“) on the fattening performance and carcass characteristics of pigs as well as on meat quality under production conditions. Each trial comprised two groups, a control group (I) and an experimental group (II). Animals of group II were fed a diet supplemented with the probiotic product Bonvital (*Enterococcus faecium* DSM 7134, 0.3x10⁹ CFU/kg feed). Group I animals received the same diet, but without the addition of the probiotic. Diet composition matched the nutrient requirements of high-performance pigs.

Both trials went according to the plan. There were no health problems. Nevertheless, the performance levels achieved in both trials differed distinctly (trial 1: average daily gain - 688 g, 3.49 kg feed/kg gain, trial 2: average daily gain - 870 g, 2.4 kg feed/kg gain, in control groups). A performance enhancing effect of Bonvital was observed in both trials, leading to an increase in daily gains (3% in trial 1 and 1.5% in trial 2) and an improvement in the feed conversion ratio (3% in trial 2). The above effect was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and numerical ($p > 0.05$). There were small differences between control and experimental animals with respect to carcass characteristics and meat quality.

Keywords: probiotic, fattening pigs, growth, feed conversion, carcass quality characteristics, meat quality.