INFLUENCE OF THE RESEARCHED AREA AND PART OF THE CARCASS ON SOME QUALITY INDICATORS OF SHEEP DRY-CURED HAM

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Abstract

"Stelja" is an autochthonous dried meat product of sheep meat, and more rarely of goat meat, traditionally produced for centuries across Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a very popular and respected product, especially for the Bosnians. The aim of the research was to determine whether the production technology of different localities and anatomical part of the carcass from which the sample was taken (*Musculus longissimus dorsi* and thigh with the leg), affected the overall quality of the sheep dry-cured ham samples. Besides that, one of the aims of the research was to collect certain qualitative parameters of the product in order to protect the product both at the national and the European Union level.

Tests were carried out in five different areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In total, 30 female animals of domestic sheep ("Pramenka") of different strains were used for the whole study. After selecting the animals, slaughter of animals and production of dry-cured sheep ham was carried out. For qualitative tests, sampling was performed after drying and cooling dry-cured sheep ham. Samples were taken from the three rib excerpt of the long back muscle and the thigh with the leg. In this research examined the slaughterhouse indicators and tests of sensory, chemical and microbiological quality of the finished product.

The results of chemical and sensory quality testing showed that there were significant differences ($P < 0.05$) linked to the influence of both the researched area and anatomical part of the carcass from which the sample was taken. By analysing the presence of heavy metals in the samples of long back muscle, it was found that the samples had been according to the EU legislation in force. Quantitative differences of the sensory properties were dependant on the researched area and the carcass part ($P < 0.05$).

On the basis of the sheep slaughter values, it can be concluded that the tested parameters were dependent on the researched area ($P < 0.05$). Sensory evaluation of the dry-cured sheep ham "Stelja" confirmed high level of acceptability and quality of the product.

***Key words**: Slaughter traits, Technology, Sheep dry-cured ham, Chemical quality, Sensory properties.*