



SDI FINAL EVALUATION FORM 1.1

PART 1:

Journal Name:	American Journal of Experimental Agriculture
Manuscript Number:	Ms_AJEA_28207
Title of the Manuscript:	Shiga toxin Producing Escherichia coli (STEC) in Food Producing Animals from Trinidad and Tobago
Type of Article:	Original Research Article

PART 2:

FINAL EVALUATOR'S comments on revised paper (if any)	Authors' response to final evaluator's comments
The paper has greatly improved, but there are still some issues that needs addressing. 1. Please have a thorough read-through with respect to language and terminology. For example in the abstract: ...” yielded E.coli that were positive for STEC”. The E. coli’s are either positive for the genes or harboured the genes. They are not positive for STEC which is an E. coli pathogroup. There are several more examples on the wrong use of words. In the last sentence of the abstract, replace “usher” with “represent”. 2. Line 33: It is not a suggestion that non-O157 STECs could be a potential source of infections in humans, this is clear. There are numerous publications showing this. A good place to start is to look at EFSA's website and the Opinon from 2013. 3. Please add in 2.1 how many fecal samples were collected from each farm or refer to table 2. 4. 2.2: Please change the title of this section. You do not have an STEC until you have determined if the virulence genes are present. How were the colonies from SMAC selected for further characterization? This might have a great influence on the results. Also, please state how many colonies were selected for further characterization from each sample. This might also influence the results. 5. 2.3: Delete “method” from line 79. Delete the sentence starting with “Reactions of the master mix....” in lines 83 and 84. Delete “cycling program” from line 84. Delete “The primers used....” in lines 98-99. 6. 3. Results and discussion. This section has greatly improved, but I would still like the authors to discuss the influence of their method on their results. The authors have selected (randomly?) E. coli isolates for further characterization after more or less direct plating of E. coli, with no mentioning how many isolates were tested. I would suspect that if enrichment broths had been screened for stx-genes, the number of positive samples would be high. Please also review the language. For example in line 17: “..animals that produced STEC genes.” This is not correct, the animals shed E. coli that harbours the appropriate genes. Also revise the sentence starting with “...Tabaquite area farm.....” as the authors have not tested the fecal samples for stx-genes. Why bring in E. coli O157:H7 in line 189? The authors are discussing STEC? This section needs revision with respect to discussion of the methodology used. I also struggle a little with understanding the relevance of section in lines 214-225. Is there a reference for the statement: “non-O157strains are often found to harbour either of the toxin genes.....”? What does the sentence “Cattle are a reservoir for STEC and can sustain an infection without coutinours exposure” mean? Table 2 is still not completely clear. From the table, I don’t understand which virulence genes that are found in the STECs. The authors may either revise the table, or make a new table with only the isolates and their virulence genes. I think the manuscript have been greatly improved, but there are still issues	1. This has been done, and as indicated in the abstract it now reads as follows “Shiga toxin producing <i>E. coli</i> (STEC) genes were detected in 9.4% (15/160) of <i>E. coli</i> isolates analyzed by molecular methods”. 2. This phrase has been changed 3. The mistake made on Table 2 information has been corrected. The number 160 consistently referred to as the samples was a mistake. It was supposed to be the numbers of the <i>E. coli</i> isolates from 205 collected fecal samples from the farms. 4. The title in 2.2 has been changed to “Method of isolation of <i>Escherichia coli</i> isolates from the bovine fecal samples”. This section has been completely revised and the mistakes have been corrected. Results did not actually change but it gave clarity to what was done. How the colonies from the SMAC plates appeared has been described as well as what other tests were performed to confirm the E. coli has been clearly stated. E. coli isolates were not screened for this (O157H7 STEC) because of our inability to procure the necessary materials as we stated previously. And since our focus was mainly detection of the genes expressed by STEC organisms, this was done by molecular analysis. 5. We have deleted the suggested words, phrases and sentences 6. We have completely revised this section. Mistake made is using the wrong figure has been corrected. The result was not affected. Paragraphs and phrases that were ambiguous have been deleted. The whole paper has been completely revised. The authors are sincerely grateful for the in depth review and attention this paper received.



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with the methodology that the authors need to clarify. The methods used will have influence on the results and my opinion is that this is still not sufficiently discussed.	
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