ENTEROTOXIGENIC CAPACITY AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF *Bacillus cereus* ON UHT MILK PRODUCTION

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Taking into account that the raw cooled milk is the most used for UHT milk production, which in most cases may has an unsatisfactory microbiological quality and also the UHT treatment may be unable to completely eliminate the bacterial spores, the aim of this work was to verify the enterotoxigenic capacity from *Bacillus cereus* stirps which have been isolated and perform an epidemiological investigation during the flow chart of UHT milk production by RAPD-PCR technique. Thereby, 6 groups of milk samples have been collected at a dairy processing plant, which one with 10 samples of raw milk, 10 samples of pasteurized milk and 30 samples of UHT milk. *Bacillus cereus* were isolated at 51,6% from raw milk samples, 81,6% from pasteurized milk and 13,8% from UHT milk samples. The capacity to produce enterotoxins have been shown by 50,0% of raw milk isolated stirps, 19,2% of isolated pasteurized and 70,7% from UHT. The epidemiological investigation showed genetic similarities between the stirps of *Bacillus cereus* isolated from raw milk, pasteurized and UHT, evidencing the resistance to UHT thermic treatment. These results should be a warning to the health department, since 13,8% samples were in disagreement with Ministry of Health standards, as they are transmitting a potential pathogen, thus demonstrating that the contamination of milk by bacteria or its spores should be of concern.