**SDI FINAL EVALUATION FORM 1.1**

**PART 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Name:</th>
<th>American Journal of Experimental Agriculture</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Number:</td>
<td>Ms_AJEA_28207</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title of the Manuscript:</td>
<td>Shiga toxin Producing Escherichia coli (STEC) in Food Producing Animals from Trinidad and Tobago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Article:</td>
<td>Original Research Article</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**PART 2:**

**FINAL EVALUATOR'S comments on revised paper (if any) | Authors' response to final evaluator's comments**

1. The paper has greatly improved, but there are still some issues that need addressing.
   
   - 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 Opinion 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 "...Ttabaquite 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 couitnours 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 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.

**Reviewer Details:**

Name: Gro S. Johannessen
Department, University & Country: Section For Food Bacteriology, Norwegian Veterinary Institute, Norway