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MEAT PERFORMANCE AND PHYSICOCHEMICAL EVALUATION OF PIGEON MEAT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the work was to evaluate the meat performance, colour and basic chemical composition (g.100 g^{-1} of water, protein, fat, and cholesterol) of the breast and tight muscles (n=20) of the California pigeons. The L* values of the California pigeons ranged from 33.38 (breast muscle) to 43.63 (tight muscle) and significant differences ($P \leq 0.05$) were observed between the breast and tight muscle. The a* value ranged from 10.03 (tight muscle) to 14.77 (breast muscle). By evaluating the b* parameter, we observed a similar tendency as with the L* value. The highest values were measured in the tight muscle (11.50) and lower in the breast muscle (9.84). The proportion of breast (42.80%) and tight (14.90%) from the carcass weight of California pigeons is relatively high, and a high average carcass yield (71.12%) was also found. The water content varied from 70.51% (tight muscle) to 72.37% (breast muscle). The average protein content of breast and tight muscle was 23.68 g.100 g^{-1}. The higher fat content was measured in tight muscle (2.95 g.100 g^{-1}) and lower (1.21 g.100 g^{-1}) in breast muscle. The cholesterol content in meat from California pigeons ranged from 0.044 g.100 g^{-1} (breast muscle) to 0.071 g.100 g^{-1} (tight muscle).

Keywords: pigeon, meat performance, colour, chemical composition

INTRODUCTION

With the improvement in people's living standards is the increasing demand for high-quality foods. The demand for functional food has greatly increased over the last decade with attention mainly to the quality of consumed meat. Nowadays, in addition to conventional types of meat, there is a growing interest in society for meat from alternative animal species, such as deer **(Volpelli *et al.*, 2003)**, ostriches **(Horbanczuk, 2002)**, quail **(Ayyub *et al.*, 2014)** and pigeons **(Zieleziński & Pawlina, 2005).** Pigeon meat is considered a delicacy and is gaining popularity among people **(Zieleziński & Pawlina, 2005; Pomianowski *et al.*, 2009; Ji *et al.*, 2020).**

Pigeon meat has been consumed by rural populations of the world since old times and is recognized as delicious and nutritious poultry meat. The pigeon meat represents not only a dietetic meat (recommended for post operatory diets or in general for the clinical cases that require a special diet) but also a significant economical production with a high protein level, low fat quantity and cholesterol and highly digestible **(Buculei *et al.*, 2010)**. Moreover, it is considered a good source of different types of vitamins, as well as essential minerals **(Paripuranam, 2014; USDA, 2020)**.

Native pigeon breeds are characterized by lower fattening, slaughter, and breeding yield parameters, but their advantages include good quality raw meat, lower feeding demands, natural resistance to bad environmental conditions, and higher resistance against illnesses and stress in comparison to regular industrial breeds **(Migdał *et al.*, 2020)**.

Around 50 breeds/genotypes of meat-type pigeons are currently known, but only a few of them have a large share in the production of pigeon meat around the world **(Brzoska, 2019)**.

The meat of pigeons, especially breast meat, is very nutritious because it is rich in high-value protein and low in cholesterol. However, leg meat, is characterized by a relatively high fat content, as well as high energy value **(Hossain *et al.*, 1994)**.

However, knowledge in terms of the chemical composition and nutritional value of pigeon meat, it is limited. Consumers often demand information about the nutritional composition of foods and the quality of the products consumed **(Cooper & Horbanczuk, 2002; Horbanczuk, 2002)**.

The objective of our study was to evaluate the meat performance, colour and basic chemical composition of the breast and thigh muscles of California pigeon meat.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the verified experiment, 20 pcs California pigeons (10 females, 10 males) was used as the biological material. The pigeons were 3 months old and came from farm breeding. Table 1 and 2 indicate composition of feed mixtures for pigeon and supplied different grit/mineral. The pigeons were euthanized and slaughtered in a permitted manner and transported in cooling boxes to the Institute of Food Sciences, SUA Nitra.

Slaughter and measurements

California pigeons were killed in accordance with the European Union Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing, and then the carcass was dissected according to Hasčík *et al.* (2020).

Chemical composition

We determined the basic chemical composition of breast and thigh muscles using Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), with a Nicolet 6700 device according to the methodology of Čech *et al.* (2021) and Haščík *et al.* (2023).

Table 1 Composition of feed mixtures for pigeon

Ingredients	**(kg.100 kg^{-1})**
Wheat	31.95
Canola seed	3.05
Peas	30.00
Corn	10.00
Pigeon balancer	10.00
Safflower seed	15.00
Nutrient content (g.kg^{-1})	
Linoleic acid	18.85
Fibre	79.00
Crude protein	159.68
Ca	13.30
P	6.19
Na	6.18
ME_N (MJ.kg^{-1})	12.35

Table 2 Mineral supplement (kg.100 kg^{-1})

Mineral	Composition
Shell grit	34.00
Granite	40.00
Limestone	20.00
Salt	6.00

Meat colour measurement

Color measurements of breast and thigh muscle samples were performed using a spectrophotometer (Konica Minolta CM-2600d, Osaka, Japan) with the Specular Component Included (SCI) setting according to Bianchi, Fletcher & Smith (2005).

Statistical analysis

The data obtained were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA) using SAS software (version 9.3, Enterprise Guide 4.2, USA). Tables show the results as the mean with standard deviation (SD) **(SAS, 2008)**.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis of California pigeon carcasses are presented in **Table 3.** **Omojola *et al.* (2012)** reported that the pigeon live BW ranges between 250 to 350 g, BW ranges between 70 to 100%, CW ranges between 150 to 200 g, respectively. The percentage of CY, eviscerated yield, breast muscle yield and leg muscle yield of pigeon ranges between 82 to 88%, 62 to 69%, 20 to 27%, and 5 to 8%, respectively **(Jiang *et al*., 2019)**. **Kokoszyński *et al.* (2020)** indicated BW of King pigeon from 463.60 g (♀) to 471.30 g (♂) and from 274.80 g (♀) to 327 g (♂) in Carrier pigeon. **Majewska *et al.* (2021)** reported in 6-weeks old of King pigeon BW (654.50 g), CW (432.50 g), CY (66.13%), weight of liver (14.24 g), gizzard (11.72 g), and heart (5.92 g). Opposite to our experiment, other authors (Omojola *et al*., 2004; Abulude *et al*., 2006; Paripuranam, 2014; Omar, Hassan & Shahin, 2017) found higher live BW, CW, or CY in male than in female pigeons. From the point of view of the California pigeons meat performance, we found significant differences (P≤0.05) between the sexes only in the weight of the breast muscle.

Table 3 Meat performance of California pigeon (g)

Parameter	♀	♂	♂ + ♀	*p-value* (♂ : ♀)
Live BW	535.23±12.39	510.55±42.79	520.42±36.14	0.345
CW	332.18±21.21	310.52±28.76	319.18±28.09	0.282
Giblets	50.80±2.64	50.05±5.39	50.35±4.51	0.823
Heart	5.80±0.64	5.12±0.74	5.39±0.778	0.214
Liver	10.40±0.58	9.47±2.073	9.84±1.71	0.455
Gizzard	12.65±0.76	12.30±1.85	12.44±1.52	0.756
Neck	21.95±2.53	23.33±3.58	22.78±3.27	0.566
Abdominal fat	1.45±0.59	1.97±1.14	1.76±0.99	0.475
Gizzard fat	1.85±0.59	1.97±0.93	1.92±0.81	0.847
CY (%)	71.52±3.14	70.86±4.27	71.12±3.87	0.818
Breast part	143.15±7.79	131.78±8.83	136.33±10.11	0.099
Breast muscle	113.10±5.51[a]	101.97±4.97[b]	106.42±7.53	0.018
Tight part	47.33±2.09	47.50±4.99	47.43±4.08	0.954
Tight muscle	25.28±0.59	26.83±3.29	26.21±2.69	0.427
Wings	65.03±4.88	61.60±7.74	62.97±6.95	0.502
Breast part of CW (%)	43.13±1.03	42.57±1.88	42.80±1.62	0.643
Breast muscle of CW (%)	34.11±1.43	33.01±2.15	33.45±1.97	0.447
Tight part of CW (%)	14.27±0.54	15.30±0.93	14.90±0.94	0.111
Tight muscle of CW (%)	7.64±0.58	8.64±0.70	8.24±0.82	0.067

Notes: BW – live body weight; CW – carcass weight; CY – carcass yield; mean±SD (standard deviation); a, b = means significant differences between column (P≤0.05) determined with Duncan test.

Table 4 Chemical composition of the most valuable parts of California pigeon (g.100 g^{-1})

Parameter	♀	♂	*p-value* (♀:♂)	♂ + ♀	*p-value* breast muscle : thigh muscle (♂ + ♀)
Breast muscle					
Water	72.09±0.58	72.56±0.44	0.225	72.37±0.55[a]	0.007
Total Protein	24.38±0.42	24.23±0.72	0.747	24.29±0.62[a]	<0.0001
Crude Fat	1.23±0.11	1.19±0.25	0.775	1.21±0.21[b]	0.001
Cholesterol	0.046±0.01	0.043±0.01	0.189	0.044±0.01[b]	<0.0001
Thigh muscle					
Water	69.95±1.47	70.88±1.08	0.324	70.51±1.30[b]	
Total Protein	23.38±0.91	22.85±1.06	0.482	23.06±1.03[b]	
Crude Fat	2.93±0.93	2.96±0.50	0.961	2.95±0.70[a]	
Cholesterol	0.072±0.002	0.069±0.01	0.734	0.071±0.01[a]	

Notes: mean±SD (standard deviation); a, b = means significant differences between column (P≤0.05) determined with Duncan test.

No significant differences were detected (P≥0.05) between the male and female California pigeons in the chemical composition of breast and tight muscles **(Table 4)**. In a joint group of California pigeon's female and male, we found significant differences (P≤0.05) in chemical composition between breast and tight muscles. Other authors found the following chemical composition of breast and tight muscles in pigeons. Compared to our results, Pomianowski *et al.* (2009) lower water content (66.52 to 70.59 g.100 g^{-1}), protein (21.73 to 23.61 g.100 g^{-1}) and significantly higher fat content (4.32 to 7.07 g.100 g^{-1}) in different breeds of pigeons found comparable water content (68.78 to 70.15 g.100 g^{-1}), lower protein content (20.56 to 21.72 g.100 g^{-1}) and significantly increased fat content (7.13 to 7.85 g.100 g^{-1}) in breast muscle and tight muscle. **Kokoszyński** *et al.* (2020) found the water content in the breast muscle 66.40 to 66.50 g.100 g^{-1} and in the tight muscle 61.50 to 62.10 g.100 g^{-1} in the King pigeon breed; the protein content was similarly higher (26.30 to 27.50 g.100 g^{-1}) compared to our experiment in breast muscle versus tight muscle (20.50 to 21.20 g.100 g^{-1}). **Kokoszyński** *et al.* (2020) found like Pomianowski *et al.* (2009) compared to our results clearly higher fat content in breast (4.20 to 5 g.100 g^{-1}) as well as in tight muscle (11.90 to 13.30 g.100 g^{-1}).

In comparison with other poultry species, Pavelková *et al.* (2020); Rebezov *et al.* (2020); Čech *et al.* (2021); **Włodarczyk** *et al.* (2021) found the water content in breast muscle from 70.70 g.100 g^{-1} (broiler chickens) to 77.40 g.100 g^{-1} in turkeys; protein content 18.90 g.100 g^{-1} (turkey) to 24.55 g.100 g^{-1} (quail); the fat content was from 0.97 g.100 g^{-1} (chicken) to 3.50 g.100 g^{-1} (partridge). In the tight muscle, the water content was from 69.38 g.100 g^{-1} (quail) to 77 g.100 g^{-1} (turkey); protein content from 18.60 g.100 g^{-1} (turkey) to 23.32 g.100 g^{-1} (quail); fat content from 1.30 g.100 g^{-1} (quail) to 5.25 g.100 g^{-1} (partridge).

The content of cholesterol in both muscles of the California pigeon was lower in the breast (44 mg.100 g^{-1}) than in the tight muscle (71 mg.100 g^{-1}), but higher than found by Pomianowski *et al.* (2009) in King and Wroclawski pigeons (23.6 to 44.4 mg.100 g^{-1} tissue). It should be emphasized that the cholesterol content in the meat of California pigeons is slightly lower than the value given for chicken breast muscle (47.1 mg.100 g^{-1} tissue; Ponte *et al*., 2004), turkey meat (34.2 to 84.8 mg.100 g^{-1} tissue; Paleari *et al*., 1998; Komprda *et al*., 2002), ostrich meat (63 to 68.4 mg.100 g^{-1} tissue; Horbanczuk *et al*., 1998) and nandu meat (75.2 mg.100 g^{-1} tissue; Horbanczuk *et al*., 2004).

Table 5 Evaluation of California pigeon meat colour

Muscle	L*	a*	b*
Breast ♂	33.36±2.69	14.51±1.29	9.65±1.96
Breast ♀	33.42±1.15	15.15±1.12	10.13±1.26
p-value	0.972	0.492	0.708
Tight ♂	42.76±4.51	10.06±1.64	11.28±1.28
Tight ♀	44.95±6.07	9.99±1.56	11.83±0.83
p-value	0.575	0.957	0.521
Breast ♂ + ♀	33.38±2.21^{b}	14.77±1.26^{a}	9.84±1.73^{b}
Tight ♂ + ♀	43.63±5.30^{a}	10.03±1.61^{b}	11.50±1.16^{a}
p-value (♂ + ♀)	<0.0001	<0.0001	0.028

Notes: mean±SD (standard deviation); a, b = means significant differences between column (P≤0.05) determined with Duncan test.

The evaluation of California pigeon meat colour is stated Table 5. The quality of muscle is usually reflected in the meat colour, pH, and drip loss. Among them, meat colour is the most visual indicator of physiological and biochemical changes in muscle. Muscle brightness values are influenced by the myoglobin and fat deposition content of the muscle, with red values reflecting the myoglobin content and yellow values reflecting the influence of ration pigments **(Mir *et al*., 2017)**. Many previous studies on the assessment of pectoral muscle meat colour have shown that the smaller the L* value, the larger the a* value, and the smaller the b* value, the better the muscle quality and vice versa **(Wu *et al*., 2018; Wen *et al*., 2020)**.
Flesh colour does not contribute much to muscle flavour, but it has been regarded as a flesh-quality trait mainly because it is affected by the meat's protein structure, myoglobin chemical state, and lipid oxidation **(Cao *et al.*, 2021).**
The colour has a key role during meat purchasing. It is considered to reflect the freshness and suitability of meat for certain culinary purposes. **Jiang *et al.* (2019)** observed a darker colour (lower L*, higher a*) in the breast muscles of 28-day-old White King pigeons. **Dong *et al.* (2019)** noted higher L* values (from 40.37 to 41.66) and higher b* values (from 14 to 17.40) in 25-day-old pigeons compared to the birds in our study. In turn, **Bu *et al.* (2018)** found higher redness (a*) and yellowness (b*) values in White King pigeons.

CONCLUSION

The male California pigeon had a similar slaughter weight and carcass weight to the female. The high proportion of breast in pigeons across the trunk makes the pigeon unique as a meat producer and ensures relatively sufficient slaughter yield. The pigeon meat is characterized by a high nutritional value. Due to its low cholesterol content and relatively high protein content, it can be used as a valuable inclusion in the human diet. Due to the achieved meat yield and idle nutritional value, the pigeon industry provides an opportunity for its further expansion on a global basis, which is probably the largest in rural areas.

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