

Research project will develop innovative plant products as treatment for parasites in organic hens

The research project BIOACT aims at developing a solution which reduces, or entirely removes, the need of medical treatment against parasites in hens.



Photo by Thomas Fibiger

7 March 2023 by By Sofie Knorr Jensen, cand.scient in agrobiolgy, consultant at Innovation Centre for Organic Farming

The European Union tightened the rules for organic egg producers in 2022. The new rules state that eggs from organic hens must be retained in a waiting period following medical treatment against parasites.

This results in an economic loss for the egg producers, who currently have no other option than medical treatment, to remove intestinal worms in hens. Thus, there is a need for new treatment options.

The project BIOACT aims at developing a solution which reduces, or entirely removes, the need of medical treatment for parasites in hens.

The purpose is to pave the way for alternative, sustainable, non-medical treatment approaches for infections with parasites. Therefore, the project has decided to develop new plant products, that repress or entirely cures parasite infections in egg layers.

If the project succeeds, the need for treatment against parasites with conventional medicine will be reduced or removed entirely. Consequently, eggs do not need to be retained in a waiting period which increases the income for organic egg producers.

BIOACT will characterize and test plant extracts as treatments for intestinal worms. The plant extracts either contain enzymes, which break down the skin of the parasites and their eggs, or other compounds, which paralyze the gut-parasites and thus lead to their excretion.

Chickens with a high occurrence of worms, are potentially able to eat more and at the same time produce less eggs. The expectation is that the new plant extracts will help overcome this issue and improve animal welfare for egg layers, due to the reduction in occurrence of intestinal worms.

The project team consists of Innovation Centre for Organic Farming (ICOEL), Aarhus University, Copenhagen University, and ASQARI Aps. The project runs from 2023 to 2025.

BIOACT (*Bioactive antiparasitic plant compounds for in-feed administration to organic egg laying hens*) is a part of the research program Organic RDD 8, which is coordinated by ICROFS (International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems). The project has received funding from GUDP (Green Development and Demonstration Program) under the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark.

For further information on BIOACT, see [ICROFS.dk](https://icrofs.dk)

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