**INTRODUCTION**

PCR-based methods are now being used increasingly in bovine mastitis diagnostics with good reliability as a complement to bacterial culture\(^1\). STARTCHECK\(^\circledR\) was recently proposed as a fast and reliable diagnostic tool for the detection of major mastitis causing pathogens in bulk tank milk (BTM) samples\(^2\). The aim of this study was to further test STARTCHECK\(^\circledR\) using BTM samples coming from different dairy herds in the EU.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

A total of 911 BTM samples were collected from different European countries, between March 2010 and June 2011. BTM samples were collected (250 µl each) and impregnated in FTA\(^\circledR\) cards following manufacturer’s instructions. Within 48 hours, samples were shipped by ordinary airmail to Diagnos Laboratory in Amer, Girona, Spain (Figure 1).

**RESULTS**

Of 911 samples tested, 676 (74.2%) were positive for at least one bacteria and 235 (25.8%) were negative. The relationship between RT-PCR and BTSCC for each of the bacteria tested is illustrated in Figures 2-5.

**DISCUSSION**

STARTCHECK\(^\circledR\) can be used as a complementary tool for bovine mastitis management. BTM samples on FTA\(^\circledR\) cards may be tested by RT-PCR, allowing report delivery in a very short timeframe. The results presented here indicate that positive RT-PCR samples for *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli* and coliform bacteria are correlated with high BTSCC.