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Treatment of Escherichia coli (O157:H7) inoculated alfalfa seeds and sprouts with electrolyzed oxidizing water.

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Electrolyzed oxidizing water is a relatively new concept that has been utilized in agriculture, livestock management, medical sterilization, and food sanitation. Electrolyzed oxidizing (EO) water generated by passing sodium chloride solution through an EO water generator was used to treat alfalfa seeds and sprouts inoculated with a five-strain cocktail of nalidixic acid resistant Escherichia coli O157:H7. EO water had a pH of 2.6, an oxidation-reduction potential of 1150 mV and about 50 ppm free chlorine. The percentage reduction in bacterial load was determined for reaction times of 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and 64 min. Mechanical agitation was done while treating the seeds at different time intervals to increase the effectiveness of the treatment. Since E. coli O157:H7 was released due to soaking during treatment, the initial counts on seeds and sprouts were determined by soaking the contaminated seeds/sprouts in 0.1% peptone water for a period equivalent to treatment time. The samples were then pummeled in 0.1% peptone water and spread plated on tryptic soy agar with 5 microg/ml of nalidixic acid (TSAN). Results showed that there were reductions between 38.2% and 97.1% (0.22-1.56 log(10) CFU/g) in the bacterial load of treated seeds. The reductions for sprouts were between 91.1% and 99.8% (1.05-2.72 log(10) CFU/g). An increase in treatment time increased the percentage reduction of E. coli O157:H7. However, germination of the treated seeds reduced from 92% to 49% as amperage to make EO water and soaking time increased. EO water did not cause any visible damage to the sprouts. PMID:12915034