



OPINION

by Prof. Krasimira Ivanova Genova, DVM, PhD

on the materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of **“Associate Professor”** in the field of higher education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional field 6.4. Veterinary Medicine, scientific specialty “Animal Pathology” in the discipline "Internal Non-Communicable Diseases," for the needs of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Forestry.

By order ZPS-249/05.05.2025 of the Rector of the University of forestry, I was appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the competition for the academic position of **“Associate Professor”** at the University of forestry in the field of higher education 6. Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, professional field 6.4. Veterinary Medicine, scientific specialty “Animal Pathology.”

In the competition for “Associate Professor,” announced in the State Gazette, No. 28/01.04.2025, and on the website of the University of forestry with procedure code: VM-AsP-0325-161, the sole candidate is Chief Assist. Atanas Georgiev Pankov, PhD. Chief Assist. Atanas Georgiev Pankov, PhD has submitted all the required documents in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Forestry and the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria

1. Brief Biographical Data

Chief Assistant Pankov graduated in the specialty “Veterinary Medicine” at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Trakia University – Stara Zagora in 1997, with an educational and qualification degree “Master.” In 2018, he defended his doctoral degree at the University of Forestry – Sofia with a dissertation dedicated to echocardiographic and radiographic studies in myxomatous valve degeneration.

His academic career began in 1998 as an assistant at the Department of “Internal Diseases, Pathology, and Pharmacology” at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Forestry. He subsequently held the positions of Senior Assistant and Chief Assistant. Following changes in the regulatory framework and a successful competition, since 2019 he has been Chief Assistant at the same department. He teaches internal non-communicable diseases, propedeutics, cardiology,

wildlife diseases, and mobile clinic practice. He participates in the examination process and in reviewing reports from the pre-graduation internship.

His scientific interests focus on veterinary cardiology, with research on myxomatous valve degeneration cited in international publications. In 2017, he established that certain echocardiographic and radiographic indicators cannot serve as independent criteria for therapy, and in 2019, he demonstrated sex-related differences in disease progression.

He has experience in teaching, research, and project activities, possesses good communication and organizational skills, has English proficiency at level B2, and works confidently with information technologies.

2. Evaluation of the Candidate's Scientific, Research, and Publication Activity

The scientific contribution of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Atanas Pankov is significant and consistent, clearly outlining his research interests in the field of internal diseases in animals, particularly degenerative mitral valve disease (DMVD) in dogs.

The monograph *“Comparative Echocardiographic Studies of Dogs with Degenerative Myxomatous Valve Disease (DMVD) Depending on the Disease Stage and/or Sex of the Animals”* (2024) is a comprehensive work that systematizes the results of many years of research and represents a significant contribution to veterinary cardiology in Bulgaria.

His publications (G7.1 – G7.7) emphasize detailed echocardiographic analyses, tracking the influence of disease stage, sex, and the presence of pulmonary hypertension, as well as correlations between radiographic and echocardiographic indicators. They contribute to more precise diagnosis and staging of DMVD. The article in *Trakia Journal of Sciences* (G7.6) examines the effectiveness of classification systems for categorizing dogs according to disease severity, which has direct practical significance.

Another focus is his research on hematological and biochemical parameters (G7.8–G7.11; G8.1–G8.9), related to various pathological conditions and the effects of probiotics, nutritional supplements, or medications on animals. These studies, conducted within collaborative research teams, enhance knowledge of metabolic and physiological adaptations in different animal species. Publications in the field of clinical-toxicological research (G7.12–G7.15; G8.4–G8.6) contribute to evaluating the safety and tolerance of veterinary medicinal products, forming a basis for their practical application.

Overall, Dr. Pankov's scientific output is characterized by thematic consistency, systematic approach, and contribution both in diagnostic echocardiography for dogs with DMVD and in the broader field of internal diseases and toxicology in domestic animals. It combines theoretical

analysis with practical applicability, establishing the author as a specialist with sustainable and significant research results.

Dr. Pankov's findings on mitral valve disease (MVD) in dogs have received international recognition and commentary from specialists in the field. Publications by Cavalier Health (2017, 2019) highlight the importance of his observations: Dr. Pankov demonstrated that standard echocardiographic indicators, such as the LA/Ao ratio and the radiographic VHS, cannot independently serve as criteria for initiating therapy, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive assessment of disease stage. Furthermore, his research identified sex-related differences in MVD progression, showing that male and female dogs may exhibit different rates of disease development and echocardiographic features. These findings reinforce the importance of a personalized approach in monitoring and treating the disease.

Dr. Atanas Pankov is an active researcher with proven contributions in clinical, hematological, biochemical, and immunological science in animals. He has completed over six scientific projects involving experimental and comparative studies on dogs, pheasants, rabbits, and wild carnivores, funded by NIS-LTU and the Ministry of Education and Science (MON).

His scientific output includes publications, contributions to collective research works, and a monograph, highlighting the systematic and interdisciplinary nature of Dr. Pankov's work.

3. Contributions

The scientific publications and projects presented by Chief Assistant Atanas Georgiev Pankov demonstrate a significant contribution to the field of non-communicable internal diseases in animals, with a focus on cardiovascular pathology in dogs and blood-gas homeostasis in calves. His scientific output encompasses a variety of publication forms, including a monograph, articles in indexed journals, collective volumes, conference proceedings, as well as participation in research and applied projects.

The main scientific contributions focus on a detailed analysis of linear correlations between echocardiographic parameters in dogs with degenerative myxomatous mitral valve disease (DMVD). The studies demonstrate significant differences in disease progression depending on the sex of the animals, tracking the adaptive mechanisms of the left ventricle and mitral valve, as well as correlations between functional and structural cardiac indices. For the first time, specific patterns in the linear correlation of systolic and diastolic parameters across different stages of DMVD were identified, as well as limitations of the radiographic RLAD measurement in evaluating advanced disease stages. Additionally, the studies examined the applicability of the Gaasch & Zile classification from human medicine to dogs, confirming its reliability for monitoring MMVD progression.

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The applied research contributions highlight the impact of nutritional supplements on animal health, emphasizing the effects of specific products on immunological parameters and sex-specific responses of the left ventricular myocardium. These studies provide practical guidance for optimizing nutrition and health monitoring in domestic animals, while also underlining the importance of sex differences in assessing pathophysiological processes.

The presented publications and projects demonstrate solid scientific reasoning, originality, and applicability, combining fundamental research with practical guidance for veterinary medicine. They confirm the author's significant contribution to the development of the discipline "Non-communicable Internal Diseases" and the specialization "Animal Pathology."

4. Assessment of the Candidate's Personal Contribution

The personal contribution of Chief Assist. Atanas Georgiev Pankov is substantial and clear. He is the author of original research that reveals new patterns in cardiovascular pathology in animals and the influence of various factors on their health.

5. Critical Remarks

No significant omissions, methodological errors, or incomplete analyses were found in the candidate's work and presented achievements. The candidate's contributions could be summarized more concisely. It is recommended that he publish in journals with an impact factor and strengthen his presence in the ORCID system to enhance the visibility and transparency of his scientific results.

6. Personal Impressions

My personal impression of Dr Atanas Pankov is extremely positive. He is a dedicated and talented educator and researcher, whose knowledge and enthusiasm directly benefit his students. However, he sometimes hesitates to assert his achievements and fully showcase his potential. I recommend that he work on his self-confidence, particularly when teaching in English, so that his experience and knowledge can reach students more effectively.

I believe Dr. Pankov has great potential to establish himself as a leading specialist and educator. With greater self-assurance and determination, he can build an even stronger presence in the academic community and inspire students by example. I hope he continues to work with enthusiasm and dedication, developing both his scientific activity and pedagogical skills.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Chief Assist. Atanas Pankov meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria,, and the corresponding regulations of LTU.

The candidate in this competition has presented a sufficient number of scientific works published after the materials used for the defense of his PhD degree. In the works of Chief Assist. Pankov, there are original scientific and applied contributions that have received recognition. A significant portion of these works has been published in journals and scientific collections issued by prestigious academic publishers. His theoretical developments have practical applicability, and some are directly oriented toward teaching activities.

The scientific and teaching qualifications of Chief Assist. Atanas Georgiev Pankov are unquestionable. He demonstrates exceptional dedication and competence in both academic and pedagogical work. I recommend that he continue to develop his confidence in teaching in English, so that he can convey his knowledge and experience even more effectively. The results he has achieved in both teaching and research fully comply with the regulations of LTU.

After carefully reviewing the materials and scientific works submitted in this competition, and analyzing their significance and the scientific, applied-scientific, and practical contributions they contain, I find it justified to give a positive evaluation. I am pleased to recommend to the Scientific Jury that they prepare a report to the Faculty Council of FVM for the appointment of Chief Assist. Atanas Georgiev Pankov, PhD to the academic position of **Associate Professor** in Professional Field 6.4. Veterinary Medicine, Scientific Specialty “Animal Pathology.”

08.08.2025

Prepared by:

(Prof. K. Genova, DVM, PhD)