

## Relevance of Honey Bee in Semen Extender on the Quality of Chilled-Stored Ram Semen

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### ABSTRACT

The effect of Honey bee supplementation into Tris extender on semen quality and bacterial activity of chilled- stored Barky ram' semen was studied. Semen samples were processed in Barky ram's semen extender with or without honey bee. Seven adult Barky rams aged 24-36 month and weighed  $43.0 \pm 1.5$  kg were used. A total of 210 ejaculates were collected from the seven rams using an artificial vagina, 30 ejaculates each, twice weekly throughout the period of the study (July- October, 2016). After collection, each ejaculate was diluted (1:10) with Tris-based extender at 37°C immediately after dilution, the specimens were split into 4 aliquots; the first aliquot served as control (C), whereas the other 3 aliquots were supplemented with 1.5 (HB 1.5), 3 (HB 3) and 4.5 (HB 4.5) ml honey bee/100 ml extender. Both control and treated specimens were subjected to chilled preservation at 5°C for a period of 48 h, during which semen physical characteristics were evaluated, immediately after dilution time and every 24 h thereafter until 48 h storage at 5°C. Microbial contamination in all specimens was also determined at 0, 24 and 48 h. The results showed that supplementing semen extender with honey bee improved ( $P < 0.05$ ) sperm motility and reduced ( $P < 0.05$ ) percent of dead and abnormal spermatozoa and acrosomal damage. In conclusion, supplementing semen extender with honey bee for ram semen preservation at 5°C has reduced the deleterious effects due to chilling condition. This would facilitate the application of assisted reproductive technologies; i.e. artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization in sheep by extending the storability and survival of sheep sperm.

**Keywords:** Ram semen, chilled storage, honey bee, bacterial contamination.

### INTRODUCTION

Artificial insemination (AI), a useful assisted reproductive biotechnology tool, has been applied to achieve rapid livestock genetic improvement, production (Yimer *et al.*, 2015). Nowadays, semen cryopreservation has many biotechnological applications since it can be used to solve problems of infertility, life threatening diseases, preservation of semen and sperm DNA from endangered species and conservation of biodiversity. Semen extender is added in order to maintain spermatozoa metabolic demands, control pH changes in the extracellular environment of the spermatozoa, minimize cryogenic damage, and also control bacterial contamination.

Commonly added nutrients in semen extender are simple sugars such as glucose and fructose (Bearden *et al.*, 2004). Egg yolk-based extender has been the common and most extensively used extender but it is a good medium for the growth of microorganisms (Geoffrey *et al.*, 1992). Honey bee, however contains high level of metabolizable energy in from of glucose and fructose and antibacterial (inhibit a broad spectrum of around 60 species of bacteria including aerobes and anaerobes, Gram positives, and Gram negatives) (Hannan *et al.*, 2004) activity against microorganisms (AL-Waili, 2004). Moreover, honey bee contains minor quantities of amino acids, vitamins, antioxidant properties, phenolic acids and flavonoids (Andrade *et al.*, 1997), certain enzymes, ascorbic acid, minerals (White, 1975) and also has antibacterial effects against some microorganisms which are resistant to the common antibiotics used in extenders (Molan and Russell, 1988). Therefore, the aim of the current study was to elucidate the effects of supplementing various levels of honey bee in the Tris-based extender on the semen quality of Barky ram's semen during preservation at 5°C.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Animals and Management

The study was carried out at the Artificial Insemination Lab., Mariout Research Station, Desert Research Center, Egypt. Seven sexually mature Barky rams, aged from 24 to 36 months and weighed  $43.0 \pm 1.5$  kg were used during July to October, 2016. Throughout the experimental the rams where housed in fenced open yard they were allowed to feed daily on Egyptian clover hay (*Trifolium alexandrinum*) *ad lib.*, and a concentrate mixture was offered to meet their protein and energy requirements (NRC, 1985). Fresh water was supplied once daily after returning from the pasture. Prior to executing the experiment, all rams were clinically examined and were found free of diseases and reproductive disorders.

#### Semen extender

Ram semen was extended by a Tris - citrate-egg yolk extender was prepared as described by El-Bahrawy *et al.* (2004). Briefly, the extender was composed of Tris buffer (0.25 M, 3.025 %), citric acid (1.67 %), and egg - yolk (5 %). The extender was freshly prepared 24 h prior to the collection sessions.

#### Semen collection

The ejaculates (210) were collected from the rams, 30 ejaculates each, throughout the period of study (July-October, 2016). Collection of semen was performed at 07:00 a.m. twice weekly using an artificial vagina as previously described (El-Bahrawy *et al.*, 2004).

#### Experimental design

Raw semen samples were transported to the laboratory immediately after collection. Ejaculate volume (ml), hydrogen-ion concentration (pH), mass motility, and sperm concentration were recorded for each raw ejaculate. The mean values of mentioned criteria throughout the experimental period were  $0.99 \pm 0.04$  ml,  $6.85 \pm 0.08$ ,  $4.47 \pm 0.07$  and  $234.021 \pm 15.29 \times 10^9$  sperm/ml, respectively. Thereafter, each ejaculate

was diluted (1:10) with Tris - citrate-egg yolk extender, and was split into 4 aliquots using a split-sample technique.

The four designed treatments were; control (C) without honey bee, HB1.5 which contained 1.5 ml of honey bee per 100 ml of extender, HB3 which contained 3 ml honey bee in 100 ml extender and HB4.5 which contained 4.5 ml honey bee per 100 ml extender. All diluted semen specimens were evaluated for sperm physical characteristics immediately at zero time (T0) and thereafter at 24 and 48 h of storage at 5°C.

#### Semen evaluation

A phase - contrast microscope (Leica) at X 400 magnification was used to evaluate the sperm forward motility in the diluted semen, primary and secondary sperm abnormalities and sperm viability (live and dead sperm, %) were examined. The percentages of sperm primary and secondary abnormalities as well as acrosome damage were evaluated using Romanowski's triple-stain technique (DIFF-QUICK III, Vertex, Egypt). Smears preparation and staining procedure were conducted following instructions provided by the manufacturer, and the stained smears were evaluated using a phase-contrast microscope at X 1000 magnification. Sperm plasma membrane integrity was determined using hypo-osmotic swelling test (HOST) according to the modified method of Mosaferi *et al.* (2005) at X 400 magnification.

#### Determination of microbial load

Within 15 min. after the periodical evaluation of semen characteristics (T0, T24, T48), a sample of each chilled specimen was transported at cool temperature to the lab. The samples were exposed to automated determination of colony forming unit (CFU) and microbial identification using the VITEK<sup>®</sup> 2 system (VITEK<sup>®</sup> 2, Bio Mériieux, USA). The determination procedure was conducted according to the manufacturer's instructions.

#### Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed using GLM procedure of SPSS (1999) to evaluate the differences in sperm criteria among different treatments (0, 1.5, 3 and 4.5 ml honey bee/100ml) and observation time (0, 24 and 48 h). Significant differences were detected using Duncan Multiple Range test (Duncan, 1955) and was considered at P<0.05. The following statistical model was applied;

$$Y_{ijk} = \mu + C_i + T_j + CT_{ij} + e_{ijk}$$

#### Where:

$Y_{ijk}$  = an observation on item  $K_j$ ,

$\mu$  = overall mean,

$C_i$  = a fixed effect of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  treatment,

$T_j$  = a fixed effect of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  time of preservation,

$CT_{ij}$  = interaction between treatment and preservation time,

$e_{ijk}$  = random error assumed to be normally distributed with mean = 0 and variance =  $\sigma^2_e$ .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Effect of honey bee and storage time on semen quality

Sperm cells are the endpoint of male

spermatogenesis and have particular anatomic and metabolic features. Nowadays, sperm cryopreservation and storage are great demand for conserving the supergenetic origins of the males for the use in artificial insemination (AI) and in vitro fertilization (IVF) (Medeiros *et al.*, 2002).

Data presented in Tables 1, 2,3, and 4 show that supplementing ram's semen with 1.5,3, and 4.5 ml honey bee/100 ml extender significantly (P<0.05) improved semen quality (represented by increase in percentage of advanced sperm motility and decreases in percentages of dead spermatozoa, sperm abnormalities and acrosome damages during chilling storage for up to 48 hours.. Time progression of diluted semen stored at 5°C for up to 48 hours significantly (P<0.05) decreased the percentages of sperm motility and increased the percentages of dead and abnormal spermatozoa, and acrosome damage (Tables 2,3 and 4) these observations were in agreement with the results obtained by Seleem *et al.* (2007). According to Januskauskas and Zillinskas (2002), sperm motility reduction resulted from cryopreservation is believed to be mainly associated with mitochondrial damages and lack of its enzymes in human spermatozoa. Furthermore, results from current study revealed that highest semen quality during cold storage were shown in semen samples supplemented with 3 or 4.5ml honey bee /ml00 diluted semen. No significant effects were recorded between supplementing 3 or 4.5 ml honey bee diluted semen on percentage of motility. These results supported the idea that honey bee acts as an antibacterial agent (Kacáńiová *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, other researchers suggested an antioxidant activity (Ferrerres *et al.*, 1992), phenolic content activity (Andrade *et al.*, 1997) and antibacterial activity (Mullai and Menon, 2007). reported that honey bee components (antioxidant activity, phenolic content, antibacterial agent) play major roles to protect sperm against harmful effects of reactive oxygen species (ROS) and to improve sperm motility and membrane integrity during cold storage. Thus, these improvements in semen due to the existence of honey bee in the dilution media might be attributed to increasing oxidative stability. On the other hand, honey bee is a supersaturated solution of sugars, of which fructose (38%), glucose (31%) are the main contributors as additive energy source of sperm cells (White, 1975). Additionally, amino acids and proteins in honey bee improved rabbits' semen quality during chilling condition which increased fertilizing ability (Elspeiy *et al.*, 2014). Muhammad *et al.* (2014) reported that honey bee has been used in cryoprotectant medium. The clear explanation of its cryoprotective effects is its low melting point. Olayemi *et al.* (2011) stated that addition of small proportion of honey in egg yolk-extender (5 ml honey + 15 ml egg yolk + 80 ml sodium citrate) gave the highest percent of sperm motility and live/dead ratio of liquid goat cooled semen. Also, Aljady *et al.* (2000) recorded an antioxidant and antibacterial effects of honey and this illustrated the good semen quality of preserved semen with extenders containing honey. In a recent study, Akandi *et al.* (2015) reported that the addition of 1-2% honey to a boar semen extender (based

on glucose, sodium bicarbonate, sodium citrate and EDTA) proved its effectiveness in preserving boar semen. One extra theory of the physical effect of honey is its high viscosity creates potential hyperosmotic extracellular environment around sperm cells that enhances efflux of intracellular fluid thereby minimizing formation of ice crystals inside the sperm cytoplasm which has been linked to sperm damage during cryopreservation (Fakhrildin *et al.*, 2014). This mechanism of protection gives honey the property of a non-permeable cryoprotectant. More specifically, *in vivo* supplementation of honey has been also reported to increase different antioxidants and a decreases oxidative stress biomarkers present in seminal plasma of humans (Tartibian *et al.*, 2011).

**Table 1. Mean percentage of sperm motility of the extended Barky ram's semen supplemented with honey bee during storage at 5°C**

Storage time Treatment	0 h	24 h	48 h	Mean	SEM
C	82.2 <sup>c</sup>	67.6 <sup>g</sup>	61.60 <sup>h</sup>	70.47 <sup>A</sup>	2.43
HB1.5	82.2 <sup>c</sup>	78.33 <sup>de</sup>	72.20 <sup>f</sup>	77.58 <sup>B</sup>	1.24
HB 3	86.2 <sup>b</sup>	81.20 <sup>cd</sup>	78.2 <sup>de</sup>	81.87 <sup>C</sup>	1.05
HB 4.5	90.2 <sup>a</sup>	79.2 <sup>cde</sup>	77.2 <sup>e</sup>	82.20 <sup>C</sup>	1.63
Mean	85.20 <sup>A</sup>	76.08 <sup>B</sup>	72.80 <sup>C</sup>		
SEM	0.9	1.3	1.7		

A,B,C Means within column (treatment), or row (time) with different superscript significantly differ at P<0.05; a-b-c-d-e-f-g-h Means in the same column with different superscripts significantly differ at P<0.05.

**Table 2. Mean percentage of dead sperm of the extended Barky ram's semen supplemented with honey bee during storage at 5°C**

Storage time Treatment	0 h	24 h	48 h	Mean	SEM
C	15.80 <sup>cd</sup>	21.06 <sup>b</sup>	25.92 <sup>a</sup>	20.93 <sup>A</sup>	1.24
HB1.5	14.80 <sup>cd</sup>	16.80 <sup>c</sup>	22.80 <sup>ab</sup>	18.13 <sup>A</sup>	1.07
HB 3	12.80 <sup>def</sup>	14.80 <sup>cde</sup>	22.80 <sup>ab</sup>	16.80 <sup>B</sup>	1.29
HB 4.5	10.80 <sup>f</sup>	11.80 <sup>ef</sup>	16.80 <sup>c</sup>	13.13 <sup>C</sup>	0.90
Mean	13.55 <sup>A</sup>	16.12 <sup>B</sup>	22.08 <sup>C</sup>		
SEM	0.66	0.91	0.90		

A,B,C Means in the same column (treatment) and row (time) with different superscript significantly differ at P<0.05; a-b-c-d-e-f-h Means in the same column with different superscripts significantly differ at P<0.05.

**Table 3. Mean percentage of sperm abnormalities of the extended Barky ram's semen supplemented with honey bee during storage at 5°C**

Storage time Treatment	0 h	24 h	48 h	Mean	SEM
C	11.80 <sup>ab</sup>	15.80 <sup>ab</sup>	22.80 <sup>a</sup>	16.80 <sup>A</sup>	1.34
HB 1.5	11.80 <sup>ab</sup>	15.80 <sup>ab</sup>	21.80 <sup>a</sup>	16.47 <sup>A</sup>	1.24
HB 3	9.80 <sup>b</sup>	12.80 <sup>c</sup>	16.80 <sup>b</sup>	13.13 <sup>B</sup>	0.96
HB 4.5	9.80 <sup>b</sup>	13.80 <sup>c</sup>	15.80 <sup>b</sup>	13.13 <sup>B</sup>	0.88
Mean	10.80 <sup>A</sup>	14.55 <sup>B</sup>	19.30 <sup>C</sup>		
SEM	0.54	0.57	0.85		

A,B,C Means within the same column (treatment) and row (time) with different superscript significantly differ at P<0.05; a-b-c Means in the same column with different superscripts significantly differ at P<0.05.

**Table 4. Mean percentage of acrosome damage of the extended Barky ram's semen supplemented with honey bee during storage at 5°C**

Storage time Treatment	0 h	24 h	48 h	Mean	SEM
C	13.80 <sup>ab</sup>	15.80 <sup>a</sup>	19.80 <sup>a</sup>	16.47	0.88
HB 1.5	11.80 <sup>b</sup>	13.80 <sup>b</sup>	18.80 <sup>ab</sup>	14.80	0.97
HB 3	11.80 <sup>b</sup>	14.80 <sup>ab</sup>	17.80 <sup>abc</sup>	14.80	0.87
HB 4.5	11.80 <sup>b</sup>	15.80 <sup>a</sup>	17.80 <sup>abc</sup>	15.13	0.88
Mean	12.30 <sup>A</sup>	15.05 <sup>B</sup>	18.55 <sup>C</sup>		
SEM	0.53	0.53	0.53		

A,B,C Means within row with different superscript significantly differ at P<0.05.

a-b-c-d-e Means with different superscripts, differ significantly (p<0.05).

**Total bacterial count in semen as a consequence of honey bee supplementation**

Data in Table (5) clearly illustrate that, honey bee at the different concentrations, generally, had a broad action against total bacterial count in diluted semen stored at 5°C.

Results revealed a linear relationship between honey level and bacterial count. Moreover, the highest honey bee level (4.5 ml /100 ml extender) had the lowest (P<0.05) total bacterial count. Time wise, the total bacterial count significantly (P<0.05) increased with the advancement of storage time. It is important to efficiently control the population of micro-organisms in the semen when using artificial insemination. Sone (1982) showed low effectiveness of streptomycin and penicillin against six species of semen microflora. In a comparative study by Sevinc *et al.* (1984), they found that semen supplemented with chloramphenicol has the highest fertility (93.1%), followed by the semen containing penicillin and streptomycin (30-80%) and the worst semen resulting the poorest fertility was that supplemented with ampicillin (29%). The antimicrobial activity in most honeys is probably attributed to the enzymatic production of hydrogen peroxide (Mandal *et al.*, 2010). Also, its mechanism might be related to the low pH of honey and its high sugar content (high osmolality) that is enough to hinder the growth of microbes, the acidic properties of gluconic acid and the antiseptic properties of its H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (O'Grady *et al.*, 1997). It is interesting to notice that antimicrobial properties of honey *in vitro* include H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, methylglyoxal, antimicrobial peptide and bee defensin-I, are distinct mechanisms involved in the bactericidal activity of honey (Khan *et al.*, 2007). These inherent properties of honey are responsible for its high antimicrobial properties. In the same trend, Raju and Goli, (2013) documented that the antimicrobial properties of honey might be ascribed to its contents of both hydrogen peroxide as well as non-peroxide components (i.e. lysozyme, phenolic acids and flavonoids). Mundo *et al.* (2004) investigated effects of honey on various bacteria and found its inhibitory effects on 60 species of bacteria, including aerobes and anaerobes, gram-positives and gram-negatives. Honey was found to have inhibitory effects on bacterial growth (*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus epidermidis* and *Bacillus cereus*) comparable to the antibiotic

penicillin, kanamycin and streptomycin (Mierzejewski, 2014). Recently, Abubaker *et al.* (2015) indicated that honey bee inhibited the growth of some pathogenic bacteria as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Proteus mirabilis* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. These findings agree with the results reported by Oyeleke *et al.* (2010) who showed that undiluted honey was also able to inhibit the growth of *Proteus mirabilis*, *P. aerussginosa*, *E. coli*, *Streptococcus faecalis*, *Clostridium perfringens* and *S. aureus*.

**Table 5. Effect of honey bee level in semen extender on total bacterial count of Barky ram's semen during preservation at 5°C for 48 hours**

Storage time Honey bee	0 h	24 h	48 h	Mean	SEM
C	11980 <sup>a</sup>	12480 <sup>a</sup>	13000 <sup>a</sup>	12487 <sup>A</sup>	124
HB 1.5	7393 <sup>b</sup>	9480 <sup>b</sup>	11380 <sup>b</sup>	9418 <sup>B</sup>	481
HB 3	7147 <sup>b</sup>	8507 <sup>c</sup>	8813 <sup>c</sup>	8156 <sup>B</sup>	224
HB 4.5	6880 <sup>b</sup>	7347 <sup>d</sup>	7980 <sup>d</sup>	7402 <sup>BC</sup>	157
Mean	8350 <sup>A</sup>	9454 <sup>B</sup>	10293 <sup>C</sup>		
SEM	506	445	466		

A,B,C Means in the same column (treatment) and row (time) with different superscript significantly differ at P<0.05; a·b·c· d Means within a column with different superscripts significantly differ at P<0.05.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, supplementing ram semen with honey bee in its extension media proved to be not only effective as a source of energy for the sperm during cold storage, but it also acts as natural antibiotics against pathogenic bacteria hindering the sperm survival and its subsequent fertilizing ability. Further studies are warranted to address the efficiency of this regime of semen preservation technique on sperm DNA integrity and its fertilization capacity.

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### أهميه عسل النحل في المخفف علي صفات السائل المنوي المخزن بالتبريد للكباش عوض عبد الغنى زغلول

قسم فسيولوجيا الحيوان والدواجن – شعبة الإنتاج الحيواني والدواجن مركز بحوث الصحراء بالمطرية – القاهرة

لدراسة تأثير إضافة عسل النحل لمخفف الترس على المقدرة الحفظية والنشاط البكتيري للسائل المنوي لكباش البرقي – تم جمع عينات السائل المنوي من سبع كباش برقي تتراوح اعمارها ما بين 24-36 شهر ومتوسط أوزانها 43 كجم  $\pm$  1.5 كجم تم جمع 210 قذفه من السائل المنوي (بمعدل 30 قذفه من كل كباش) باستخدام المهبل الصناعي مرتين أسبوعيا على مدار فترة التجربة (يوليو – أكتوبر 2016) بعد الجمع مباشرة تم تخفيف القذفات بنسبة 10:1 بمخفف الترس – سترك – صفار بيض ، قسمت العينات المخفف بالتساوي لأربع مجموعات تجريبية ، استخدمت المجموعه الأولى كمجموعه مقارنه (غير معامله) بينما دعمت المجموعه الثانية بـ 1.5 مل عسل نحل / 100 مل مخفف ، دعمت المجموعه الثالثه بـ 3 مل عسل نحل / 100 مل مخفف ودعمت المجموعه الرابعه بـ 4.5 مل عسل نحل / 100 مل مخفف تم تقييم الخصائص الطبيعية للحيوانات المنوية إضافة لتقدير الحمل المكروبي لجميع العينات بدأ من بعد التخفيف مباشرة وعلى مدار 48 ساعة من الحفظ بالتبريد على 5م°، وقد اشارت النتائج ان إضافة عسل النحل للمخفف مباشرة حسن الحركة التقدمية للحيوانات المنوية بنسبة ( $p < 0.05$ ) كما أنخفضت معنويا ( $p < 0.05$ ) كلا من نسبة الحيوانات المنوية الميتة والمشوهة ونسبة الاختلالات في غشاء الأكرسوم وتشير نتائج هذه التجربة الى كفاءة استخدام عسل النحل في الحفظ بالتبريد للسائل المنوي في الكباش بما يساهم في تطبيق التقنيات التناسليه الحديثه المساعده وخاصة التلقيح الاصطناعي والاختصاص المعمل في الأغنام .

**الكلمات الدلالية:** سائل منوي الكباش ، تخزين بالتبريد ، عسل النحل ، تلوث بكتيري

