

**Original Research Article****DOI: 10.26479/2019.0503.21****STUDY ON THE TOXICITY OF COPPER ON BIOCHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF *LITOPENAEUS VANNAMEI* (BOONE 1931)****S. Arul Prasath<sup>1</sup>, V. Valarmathi<sup>2</sup>, K. Muthukumaravel<sup>3\*</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT:** The effect of sub lethal concentrations of copper on biochemical components such as carbohydrate, protein and lipids were studied in the pacific white shrimp *Litopenaeus vannamei* up to 30 days at an interval of 10 days. The exposed pacific white shrimp are exhibited differential changes in biochemical constituents. The changes were dependent on the period of exposure and concentrations of copper. The effect of 30% sub lethal concentration was to be pronounced than that of 10% sub lethal concentration.

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**KEYWORDS:** Toxicity of Copper, *Litopenaeus vannamei*, Biochemical Composition.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Heavy metal pollution of aquatic ecosystem has long been recognized as a serious environmental concern because of their persistency and tendency to accumulate in organisms undergo food chain amplification. As a result, metal bioaccumulation is a major route through which increased levels of the pollutants are transferred across food chain and creating public health problems wherever man is involved in the food chain. Therefore, it is important to always determine the bioaccumulation capacity for heavy metals by organisms especially the edible ones in order to assess potential risk in human health. Although voluminous data are available on the toxic effect of different pollutants on the aquatic organisms, only few studies are documented on the impact of heavy metals on prawn.

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Hence the present investigation is attempted to elucidate the impact of the heavy metal copper on the prawn *Litopenaeus vannamei*. These studies would ultimately focus the attention on the water criteria, nature and the tolerable extent of the accumulation of heavy metal copper which form the basic steps helpful for conservation of aquatic organisms and to prevent possible disorders caused to human beings by way of biomagnifications of these pollutants.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Prawn Acclimatization

The *Litopenaeus vannamei* of the carapace length of  $3.0 \pm 0.5$  cm and breath of  $4.0 \pm 0.5$  cm were selected for the experiment and were collected from Muthupet mangroves ( $10^{\circ}$  - $20^{\circ}$  N,  $79^{\circ}$  35'E), Tiruvarur district. Prawns were screened for any pathogenic infections. Plastic troughs were washed with 1%  $\text{KMnO}_4$  to avoid fungal contamination and then sun dried. Healthy prawns were then transferred to plastic troughs (20" diameter) containing estuarine water (Temperature  $29 \pm 3^{\circ}\text{C}$ ; DO  $4.2 \pm 0.5$  mg/l; salinity  $24.1 \pm 0.17$  ppt and pH  $8.6 \pm 0.05$ ). Prawns were acclimated to laboratory conditions for 10 to 15 days prior to experimentation. They were regularly fed with natural food and the medium (estuarine water) was changed daily to remove faeces and food remnants.

### Heavy Metal for Toxicity Studies

Toxicity studies were conducted to obtain reliable data regarding the effects of the toxicant on the test species. Static bioassay tests were conducted as per standards set by the American Public Health Association [4]. The toxicant sample used possessed the following characteristics.

### Heavy metal Copper

Chemical properties of copper

Atomic number	:	29
Atomic mass	:	$63.546 \text{ g.mol}^{-1}$
Electro-negativity according to Pauling	:	1.9
Density	:	$8.9 \text{ g.cm}^{-3}$ at $20^{\circ}\text{C}$
Melting point	:	$1083^{\circ}\text{C}$
Boiling point	:	$2595^{\circ}\text{C}$
Vanderwaals radius	:	0.128 nm
Ionic radius	:	0.096 nm (+1) ; 0.069 nm (+3)

### Acute Toxicity Test

Toxicity tests were conducted in accordance with standard methods [5]. Stock solution of copper with a concentration of 1 g per litre (equivalent to 1 ppt) was prepared in distilled water and different dilutions were prepared by adding required amount of distilled water. Based on the progressive bisection of intervals on a logarithmic scale, log concentrations were fixed after conducting the range finding test. The prawns were starved for 24 hours prior to their use in the experiments as

recommended by storage to avoid any interference in the toxicity of copper by excretory products. After the addition of the toxicant into the test plastic troughs with 5 litres of water having ten prawns, mortality was recorded after 24, 48, 72 and 96 hours. Five replicates were maintained simultaneously. Percent mortality was calculated and the values were transferred into probit scale. Probit analysis was carried out [7]. Regression lines of probit against logarithmic transformations of concentrations were made. Confidential limits (upper and lower) of the regression line with chi-square test were calculated by a computerized programme for Finney's probit analysis [7].

### Chronic Toxicity Test

Based on acute toxicity test (96h LC<sub>50</sub>) sublethal concentrations (10% and 30%) were derived for copper which were used as the experimental concentration of the copper in the subsequent experiments. Ten prawns were exposed to each concentration for a period of 10, 20 and 30 days. A control batch was maintained simultaneously and six trials were run. The total carbohydrate, protein and lipids were estimated by earlier researchers [8] [14] [21] respectively.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Total Carbohydrate

In the prawn reared as control the carbohydrate content was the highest in hepatopancreas (12.41-12.81 mg/g), followed by muscle (9.22-9.48 mg/g) and low in gill (7.69-7.89 mg/g). The heavy metal copper appeared to cause individually, pronounced dose and time dependent decrease in the carbohydrate content of all tested tissues (Table 1). On day 30, carbohydrate content of *Litopenaeus vannamei* was found to decrease respectively by 44.85 and 65.85% in the hepatopancreas, 47.28 and 63.12 in the gill and 37.55 and 62.45 in the muscle of prawn exposed to 10 and 30% sublethal concentration of copper. In the present study, the highest depletion of carbohydrate content was noted after 30 days of urea exposure in all the tested tissues (Table 8). The percentage depletion was higher on prawn exposed to the 30% sublethal concentration of copper than these exposed to 10% sublethal concentration of copper. Table 8 shows that the change in carbohydrates was dependent significantly on the concentration of copper as well as period of exposure for most of the tissues. Significant changes in the carbohydrate content in hepatopancreas were also observed in the experiments at different time periods (F=13426 and P<0.01). Treatment versus duration TXD showed an F value 2861.24 and P<0.01 (Table 9). Sublethal concentrations of copper have produced significant changes in the carbohydrate content in gill (F=2930.97 and P<0.01). Similarly the values in the exposure periods showed (TXD) significant changes (F=607.53 and P<0.01) (Table. 9). Significant changes were also observed in the carbohydrate content of muscle during the time periods (F=3129.68 and P<0.01). Treatment versus duration (TXD) gave an F value of 770.28 and P<0.01 (Table 4).

### Protein

In *Litopenaeus vannamei* kept as control protein content was the highest in muscle (75.4-76.62mg/g),

followed by hepatopancreas (45.5-46.1 mg/g) and moderate values were observed in gill (31.8-32.61 mg/g). Decrease in protein levels was noted in all the tissues of prawn exposed to the copper (Table 2). The maximum decrease of protein content was observed in the tissues of prawn exposed to 30% sublethal concentration of copper reared for 30 days: 42.3% in hepatopancreas, 44.19 in gill and 44.16 in muscle. Significant changes in the protein content in hepatopancreas were also observed in the experiments at different time periods ( $F=988.29$  and  $P<0.01$ ). Treatment versus duration TXD showed an F value 24.66 and  $P<0.01$  (Table 5). Sublethal concentrations of copper have produced significant changes in the protein content in gill ( $F=400.05$  and  $P<0.01$ ). Similarly the values in the exposure periods showed (TXD) significant changes ( $F=90.44$  and  $P<0.01$ ) (Table 11). Significant changes were also observed in the protein content of muscle during the time periods ( $F=3236.40$  and  $P<0.01$ ). Treatment versus duration (TXD) gave an F value of 562.53 and  $P<0.01$  (Table 5).

### Lipid

The concentration of lipid in the normal prawn was found to be maximum in hepatopancreas (39.81-40.88 mg/g) followed by muscle (20.15-21.31 mg/g), and in gill (17.98-18.31 mg/g). In the prawn exposed to sublethal concentrations of copper, significant decrease were observed in the content of lipid in all the tissues (Table 3). In prawn exposed to the highest sublethal concentration of copper (30%) for 30 days, the concentration of lipid decreased to 31.90, 43.37 and 63.88 respectively in the hepatopancreas, gill and muscle. For 10% sublethal concentration of copper the decrease in lipid content was to a lesser extent (Table 12). In general, the decrease in lipid content was maximum in gill and liver compared to hepatopancreas, gill and muscle. Significant changes in the lipid content in hepatopancreas were also observed in the experiments at different time periods ( $F=2186.12$  and  $P<0.01$ ). Treatment versus duration TXD showed an F value 334.93 and  $P<0.01$  (Table 6). Sublethal concentrations of copper have produced significant changes in the lipid content in gill ( $F=1560.85$  and  $P<0.01$ ). Similarly the values in the exposure periods showed (TXD) significant changes ( $F=245.45$  and  $P<0.01$ ) (Table 6). Significant changes were also observed in the lipid content of muscle during the time periods ( $F=10990.65$  and  $P<0.01$ ). Treatment versus duration (TXD) gave an F value of 1356.66 and  $P<0.01$  (Table 6). The carbohydrate of fishes comprised mainly glycogen and total free sugars and the fluctuations in the carbohydrate content may be due to accumulation and utilization of glycogen and total free sugars at different phases of life like growth, gametogenesis and spawning. In aquatic organisms, generally the carbohydrate reserves may be rapidly utilized under unfavourable conditions and the great variations found in the tissues indicate that the level of mobilizable carbohydrate reserves may fluctuate widely and rapidly in response to fluctuations in the nutritional state of the animal. In the present study the carbohydrate content decreased in the gill tissues of *Litopenaeus vannamei* exposed to sublethal concentrations of copper (Table 1). The fenvalerate exposed *Ctenopharyngodon idellus* showed a decrease in the carbohydrate content in the various tissues [25]. The decrease in total carbohydrate level signifies its utility possibly to meet

the higher energy demands of the fish reeling under metal toxicity. The synthesis and utilization of carbohydrate are therefore, altered in the organism subjected to copper stress. Carbohydrates which supply the major portion of the metabolites for the energy requirements in a normal individual is oxidized for the energy requisites. Carbohydrates may be converted to glycogen or shunted in the metabolic pathway to supply the carbon chain for amino acids or converted in to fat (Priscilla, 1985). At sublethal concentration, when the liver carbohydrate content decreased the haemolymph sugar level increased which suggests the breakdown of hepatopancreas glycogen (glycogenolysis). The mobilization of glucose from the hepatopancreas to the haemolymph and its availability for utilization by the needy tissues for ensuring normal metabolic processes in the body appears inevitable when the prawn is exposed to toxic medium. Many authors have reported decreased carbohydrate level in various tissues of aquatic organisms. The decreased carbohydrate in the brain of *Heteropneustes fossilis* is observed when it is exposed to carboxyl [22]. The decrease in glycogen content of brain in *C. punctatus* after the exposure of endosulfan is reported [17]. In *C. punctatus*, quantitative variations in the sugar content of liver and muscle tissues due to pesticidal exposure [28]. In the present study the muscle carbohydrate content of *Litopenaeus vannamei* showed a decrease when it was exposed to sublethal concentrations of copper (Table 1). A fall in muscle carbohydrate level in *L. rohita* when exposed to tannery, electroplating and textile effluents [16]. The high concentration of Nuvacron caused a decline in muscle carbohydrate level in *C. punctatus* [23]. These observations were in conformity with the reports on the fall in muscle glycogen level in *C. punctatus*, when exposed to organophosphate pesticide, Dimethoate [26]. Studies in general have suggested that exposure to metal treatment interferences with the carbohydrate metabolism. A greater decrease of carbohydrate content indicates greater utilization of carbohydrate to cope with enhanced metabolism under stressful situations. Despite a continuous and rapid release of glucose by glycogenolysis in the hepatopancreas, to meet the energy requirement for the increased muscular activity, a fall in the overall of carbohydrate content in prawns subjected to heavy metal treatment is imminent. Proteins are mainly involved in the architecture of the cell. During chronic period of stress, they are also a source of energy [27]. Protein is the most important constituent in living tissues, which is of considerable metabolic and structural value. Therefore, any change in this constituent indicates the stress inflicted on the metabolic functions required for maintaining a healthy physiological state. In this work the protein content of *Litopenaeus vannamei* at different sublethal concentrations decreased in all exposure periods. The depletion in tissue protein of *Litopenaeus vannamei* indicated rapid utilization of energy stores to meet the energy demands warranted by the environment. The observed depletion in tissue protein on treatment with sublethal doses of heavy metal was suggestive of proteolytic activity, possibly to meet the excess energy demands under toxic conditions. The depletion in the protein content in stomach and intestine of *Clarias batrachus* exposed to pesticides endosulfan, malathion and agrofen were reported [12]. The decrease in protein

content of *Lepidocephalichthys thermalis* exposed to sublethal concentrations of fenvalerate is recorded [11]. A significant decrease has been reported in the protein content of the liver and kidney in *Labeo rohita*, when exposed to 20% active ingredient EC. Fenvalerate [2]. A similar decrease in the total and soluble protein content has been observed with fenvalerate in fish [15] [25]. The total protein level of hepatopancreas, gill and muscle were decreased after all the three periods of exposure to the sublethal concentrations of urea. The investigations has revealed a decrease in protein content in *T. mossambica* exposed to different pesticides [13]. The protein content is decreased in liver, muscle, kidney, intestine, brain and gill when *C. punctatus* has been treated with quinaphos [24]. The decreased levels of proteins in gills, testis, ovaries and muscles of marine crab *Uca marionis* exposed to acute and chronic levels of Malathion [30]. The sublethal concentrations of Malathion showed a significant increase in the protein content in kidney of exposed fish during the first week and thereafter, a gradual decrease in protein content has been observed in the later periods of exposure [6]. Lipid is an important constituent of animal tissue, which plays a prime role in energy metabolism. Lipids are also important in cellular and sub-cellular membranes. A gradual decreases in lipid content in various tissues of *Litopenaeus vannamei* after chronic treatments of copper are shown in Table 12. Earlier researchers also suggested that the decrease in lipid content in *C. carpio* may be either due to the uptake of lipid by the tissue for utilization at cellular levels or due to increased lipolysis or mitochondrial injury, which affect the fatty acid oxidation mechanism [3][20][29]. The considerable decrease in total lipid in tissues might be due to drastic decrease in glycogen content in the same tissue which is an intermediate source of energy during toxic stress conditions. After glycogen, lipid content may be used for energy production to overcome toxic stress. Some workers support these results in which lipid content decreased in animals after exposure to pollutants. The significant decrease in lipid of *L. rohita* when exposed to heavy metal cadmium is reported [9]. The effect of dairy effluent on *O. mossambicus* was observed and reported that lipid content was decreased [1]. Similar decrease in lipid content level has also been observed in *C. punctatus* when exposed to mercurial fungicide [19]. Reduction of lipid content of *Litopenaeus vannamei* in this study may have been due to the utilization of lipids for energy demand under stress condition [10].

**Table 1. Levels of total carbohydrate in selected tissues of *Litopenaeus vannamei* exposed to sublethal concentrations of copper**

Exposure Period	10 Days			20 Days			30 Days		
Tissues	HP	GL	MC	HP	GL	MC	HP	GL	MC
Control	12.41± 0.56	7.71± 0.67	9.22± 0.78	12.81± 1.02	7.69± 0.85	9.46± 0.91	12.62± 0.69	7.89± 0.78	9.48± 0.68
10% SLC	10.11± 0.81	6.92± 0.61	8.11± 0.89	8.53± 0.72	5.52± 0.68	7.22± 1.14	6.96± 0.73	4.16± 0.56	5.92± 0.47
% Variation	-18.53	-10.25	-12.04	-33.41	-28.22	-23.68	-44.85	-47.28	-37.55
30% SLC	9.61± 0.56	5.69± 0.38	7.32± 0.71	6.21± 0.78	4.32± 0.59	5.64± 0.65	4.31± 0.73	2.91± 0.61	3.56± 0.55
% Variation	-22.56	-26.2	-20.61	-51.52	-43.82	-40.38	-65.85	-63.12	-62.45

Values are mean ± SD of six observations. – or + indicate percent decrease or increase over control  
HP- hepatopancreas; GL – gill; MC – muscle

**Table 2. Levels of total protein in selected tissues of *Litopenaeus vannamei* exposed to sublethal concentrations of copper**

Exposure Period	10 Days			20 Days			30 Days		
Tissues	HP	GL	MC	HP	GL	MC	HP	GL	MC
Control	45.5± 0.65	32.12± 0.71	76.62± 0.69	45.9± 0.73	31.8± 0.58	76.18 ±0.47	46.1± 0.39	32.61± 0.47	75.4± 0.35
10% SLC	42.1± 0.51	30.5± 0.61	70.4± 0.58	38.5± 0.67	28.2± 0.49	62.1± 0.38	31.2± 0.46	25.6± 0.51	51.5± 0.66
% Variation	-7.47	-5.04	-8.12	-29.19	-11.32	-18.48	-32.32	-21.5	-31.7
30% SLC	37.5± 0.71	26.4± 0.65	61.6± 0.58	32.3± 0.47	22.5± 0.51	52.2± 0.56	26.6± 0.66	18.2±0. 72	42.1± 0.59
% Variation	-17.58	-17.8	-19.6	-29.63	-29.25	-31.48	-42.3	-44.19	-44.16

Values are mean ± SD of six observations. – or + indicate percent decrease or increase over control  
HP- hepatopancreas; GL – gill; MC – muscle

**Table 3. Levels of total lipid in selected tissues of *Litopenaeus vannamei* exposed to sublethal concentrations of copper**

Exposure Period	10 Days			20 Days			30 Days		
Tissues	HP	GL	MC	HP	GL	MC	HP	GL	MC
Control	40.88 ±0.68	18.21± 0.57	21.31± 0.47	40.11 ±0.38	17.98 ±0.51	20.15 ±0.61	39.81 ±0.87	18.31 ±0.79	21.15± 0.68
10% SLC	38.11 ±0.64	16.17± 0.51	17.21± 0.49	34.27 ±0.21	14.32 ±0.52	13.27 ±0.62	31.65 ±0.69	12.65 ±0.39	10.65± 0.47
% Variation	-6.78	-11.20	-19.24	-14.6	-20.36	-34.14	-20.5	-30.91	-49.65
30% SLC	35.19 ±0.51	14.32± 0.64	13.97± 0.38	30.61 ±0.46	11.22 ±0.51	10.12 ±0.38	27.11 ±0.51	9.27± 0.46	7.64±0. 38
% Variation	-13.92	-21.36	-34.44	-23.68	-37.6	-49.78	-31.90	-43.37	-63.88

Values are mean ± SD of six observations. – or + indicate percent decrease or increase over control  
HP- hepatopancreas; GL – gill; MC – muscle

**Table.4. Two way ANOVA table showing the significance of the effect copper on the total Carbohydrates of *Litopenaeus vannamei***

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CARBOHYDRATES – HEPATOPANCREAS**

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.0242074	0.0121037	5.87 *
TREATMENT	8	221.4956741	27.6869593	13426.99 **
T (T)	2	162.4090296	81.2045148	39380.73 **
FACTOR D	2	35.4866741	17.7433370	8604.76 **
TxD	4	23.5999704	5.8999926	2861.24 **
ERROR	16	0.0329926	0.0020620	
TOTAL	26	221.5528741		

cv = 0.5%

\*\* = significant at 1% level; \* = significant at 5% level



**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CARBOHYDRATE - GILL**

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.00227407	0.00113704	<1
TREATMENT	8	78.34367407	9.79295926	2930.97 **
T (T)	2	55.47754074	27.73877037	8302.03 **
FACTOR D	2	14.74654074	7.37327037	2206.77 **
TxD	4	8.11959259	2.02989815	607.53 **
ERROR	16	0.05345926	0.00334120	
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TOTAL	26	78.39940741		

cv = 1.0%

\*\* = significant at 1% level

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CARBOHYDRATES - MUSCLE**

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.00108889	0.00054444	<1
TREATMENT	8	98.44586667	12.30573333	3129.68 **
T (T)	2	69.27620000	34.63810000	8809.41 **
FACTOR D	2	17.05482222	8.52741111	2168.75 **
TxD	4	12.11484444	3.02871111	770.28 **
ERROR	16	0.06291111	0.00393194	
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TOTAL	26	98.50986667		

cv = 0.9%

\*\* = significant at 1% level

**Table.5. Two way ANOVA table showing the significance of the effect copper on the total protein of *Litopenaeus vannamei***

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PROTEIN - HEPATOPANCREAS**

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.046667	0.023333	<1
TREATMENT	8	1278.186667	159.773333	988.29 **
T (T)	2	878.126667	439.063333	2715.86 **
FACTOR D	2	241.846667	120.923333	747.98 **
TxD	4	158.213333	39.553333	244.66 **
ERROR	16	2.586667	0.161667	
TOTAL	26	1280.820000		

cv = 1.0%

\*\* = significant at 1% level

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PROTEIN - GILL**

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.0482741	0.0241370	<1
TREATMENT	8	538.4012741	67.3001593	400.05 **
T (T)	2	396.2960296	198.1480148	1177.85 **
FACTOR D	2	81.2445630	40.6222815	241.47 **
TxD	4	60.8606815	15.2151704	90.44 **
ERROR	16	2.6916593	0.1682287	
TOTAL	26	541.1412074		

cv = 1.5%

\*\* = significant at 1% level

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PROTEIN - MUSCLE

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.348652	0.174326	1.21 ns
TREATMENT	8	3741.305785	467.663223	3236.40 **
T (T)	2	2644.214074	1322.107037	9149.47 **
FACTOR D	2	771.950052	385.975026	2671.09 **
TxD	4	325.141659	81.285415	562.53 **
ERROR	16	2.312015	0.144501	
TOTAL	26	3743.966452		

cv = 0.6%

\*\* = significant at 1% level; ns = not significant

**Table.6. Two way ANOVA table showing the significance of the effect copper on the total lipids of *Litopenaeus vannamei***

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR LIPIDS - HEPATOPANCREAS

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.1196741	0.0598370	1.83 ns
TREATMENT	8	571.5171185	71.4396398	2186.12 **
T (T)	2	403.6912074	201.8456037	6176.67 **
FACTOR D	2	124.0453630	62.0226815	1897.95 **
TxD	4	43.7805481	10.9451370	334.93 **
ERROR	16	0.5228593	0.0326787	
TOTAL	26	572.1596519		

cv = 0.5%

\*\* = significant at 1% level; ns = not significant

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR LIPIDS - GILL**

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.0640296	0.0320148	1.55 ns
TREATMENT	8	258.3499185	32.2937398	1560.85 **
T (T)	2	200.6479407	100.3239704	4848.95 **
FACTOR D	2	37.3883185	18.6941593	903.54 **
TxD	4	20.3136593	5.0784148	245.45 **
ERROR	16	0.3310370	0.0206898	
TOTAL	26	258.7449852		

cv = 1.0%

\*\* = significant at 1% level; ns = not significant

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR LIPIDS - MUSCLE**

SV	DF	SS	MS	F
REP (R)	2	0.0062519	0.0031259	<1
TREATMENT	8	629.4794519	78.6849315	10990.65 **
T (T)	2	503.6494519	251.8247259	35174.69 **
FACTOR D	2	86.9792519	43.4896259	6074.60 **
TxD	4	38.8507481	9.7126870	1356.66 **
ERROR	16	0.1145481	0.0071593	
TOTAL	26	629.6002519		

cv = 0.6%

\*\* = significant at 1% level

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**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Authors have no conflict of interest.

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