

CONTROL OF GASTRO-INTESTINAL NEMATODES IN RUMINANTS USING PLANT EXTRACTS

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Abstract

Helminthes infestation has been recognised as a major constraint to livestock production. Increasing anthelmintic resistance and the impact of conventional anthelmintics on the environment has led to increased interest on ethnobotanical approach to come up with new novel compounds. The synthetic drugs are toxic, expensive and sometimes beyond reach of most rural small holder farmers and pastoralists. The economic losses due to helminthes infestation are enormous and unnecessary since they are preventable. The aim of this study was to test for *in vitro* anthelmintic activities of the test plants with the aim of formulating a novel herbal anthelmintic drug for ruminants. Egg hatch inhibition (EHI) tests were done to test for *in vitro* anthelmintic activities of ethanolic extracts of *Entada leptostachya*, *Albizia anthelmintica* and *Prosopis juliflora*. Graduated doses of between 0.5 and 6 mg/ml were prepared using distilled water as solvent. Fresh nematode eggs were harvested using simple salt floatation method and eggs of mixed nematode species of *Haemonchus spp.*, *Trichostrongyle spp.* and *Oesophagostomum spp.* were obtained. The *in vitro* anthelmintic activities of the plant extracts were compared to albendazole. *Entada leptostachya* inhibition was 91% and 100% and was comparable to albendazole which was 98% and 100% at 2 and 6 mg/ml respectively. *Albizia anthelmintica* showed 100% inhibition and was comparable to albendazole whose inhibition was 100% at 6mg/ml. *Prosopis juliflora* inhibition was 100% and 97% and was comparable to albendazole whose inhibition was 98% and 100% at 2 and 6mg/ml respectively. All the three test plants showed lower inhibitory anthelmintic activities at the lower concentrations compared to albendazole. The ethanolic extracts of the three plants have potential as novel anthelmintic drugs for gastro-intestinal nematodes.

Key words: Ethnobotanical, gastrointestinal nematode, anthelmintic, ruminants

1.0 Introduction

Helminthiasis is one of the most common setbacks in production and reproductive performance of livestock (Agaie and Onyeyili, 2007; Dawo and Tibo, 2005). In the developed world, with exception of countries in the southern hemisphere, the greatest impact is found in the costs of control, mostly in the case of helminth parasitoses (Githiori, 2004). Most of these effects go unnoticed because of sub-clinical or chronic nature of the diseases they cause unless the parasites cause death of the animal (Dawo and Tibo, 2005). Control of gastro-intestinal nematode (GIN) parasitism is usually based on the use of chemical anthelmintics, whose effectiveness and consistent use has been limited by high levels of anthelmintic resistance and high cost. The earliest documentation of anthelmintic resistance (AR) was to phenothiazine in 1957 followed by thiobendazole in 1964 (Fleming *et al.*, 2006). A recent survey carried out by FAO and the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE) in 77 out of 151 OIE member countries, revealed that over 50 per cent of countries are affected by parasite resistance (FAO, 2006). This has led to increasing popularity of herbal de-wormers for GIN control (Burke *et al.*, 2009). As a result, pastoralists and small holder farmers (SHFs) continue to use indigenous plants as livestock de-wormers drawn from centuries of traditional beliefs. These herbal preparations are much cheaper and readily available than synthetic drugs and have been used for a long time for treatment of livestock against helminth parasites (Githiori, 2004).

Entada leptostachya is found in several parts of Kenya (Machakos, Embu and Mbeere districts) and other parts of Africa such as Somalia, Ethiopia and Tanzania. The communities in Embu and Mbeere districts of Eastern Province, Kenya use the root bark decoction to treat worms in humans and animals (Kareru, 2008). The root bark of *Albizia anthelmintica* is used for intestinal worms. It is a common shrub in dry bushland and in Maasai-land. Saponins from its bark have been reported in South West Africa to be effective against intestinal worms (Githiori, 2004). *Prosopis juliflora* (locally known as 'Mathenge') was introduced in Kenya in the early 1970s (Ebenshade and Grainger 1980, Maghembe *et al.*, 1983) and is generally considered a noxious weed locally. This study, therefore, sorts to find out possible pharmacological application of the plant as a way of mitigating its negative attributes.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Collection and Preparation of Medicinal Plant Material

Entada leptostachya and *Albizia anthelmintica* root barks were collected from Embu and Mbeere areas of Eastern province, Kenya. *Prosopis juliflora* leaves were collected from Marigat, Baringo County. The plant specimen were identified in the field and authenticated by a plant taxonomist from the Botany department at Jomo Kenyatta University of Technology (J.K.U.A.T.) where voucher specimens were also deposited. The samples were sorted, cleaned and air dried on the laboratory benches away from direct sunlight before being ground into fine powder that were then separately stored in air-tight plastic bags for further use to avoid contact with moisture.

2.2 Preparation of Ethanolic Plant Extracts

Ethanol extracts were prepared by soaking 50g of each of the various plant powders in 500ml of distilled ethanol for 72 hours. The ethanol extracts were then filtered under vacuum using a Buchner funnel and concentrated under vacuum using a rotary evaporator at 40°C. The extracts were then stored at -4°C until needed for bioassay.

2.3 Screening of the Ethanolic Plant Extracts for *In Vitro* Anthelmintic Activities

Nematode egg recovery was done using simple floatation method (Hansen and Perry, 1994) with a few modifications. Goodwin's solution was prepared by dissolving 4.25g of NaCl and 0.5g of glucose in 50ml of distilled water and this was used as egg diluent and physiological solution. The egg solution was adjusted to 16 eggs per 5µL of egg solution using Goodwin's solution. The eggs were quantified by counting and averaging the number of eggs present in 5µL of egg solution. Five microliters (5µL) of egg solution each was placed on three slides and coverslips placed on them and counting done under a microscope (X10). The egg hatch inhibition assay was done following a method by Thoithi *et al.* (2002) with slight modifications. Five microliters (5µL) of the egg solution was measured into each well of a 96-well microtitre plate. Hundred microliters (100µL) of the plant extracts at the various graduated concentrations (0.5 to 6mg/ml) were then added. Distilled water and 0.5% DMSO was used as negative control. The activities of the plant extracts were compared to albendazole at the same concentration range. The experiment was done in triplicate. The hatched eggs were then counted in each of the wells under a microscope (X10) after 48 hours.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Extraction Yield

The ethanolic extract yields for the three plants are shown in Figure 1. *Entada leptostachya* gave the highest crude extract yield (11.39%) while *Albizia anthelmintica* gave the lowest yield (5.24%). This could possibly be as a result of *Entada leptostachya* having more phytochemical principles whose polarity corresponds to that of ethanol.

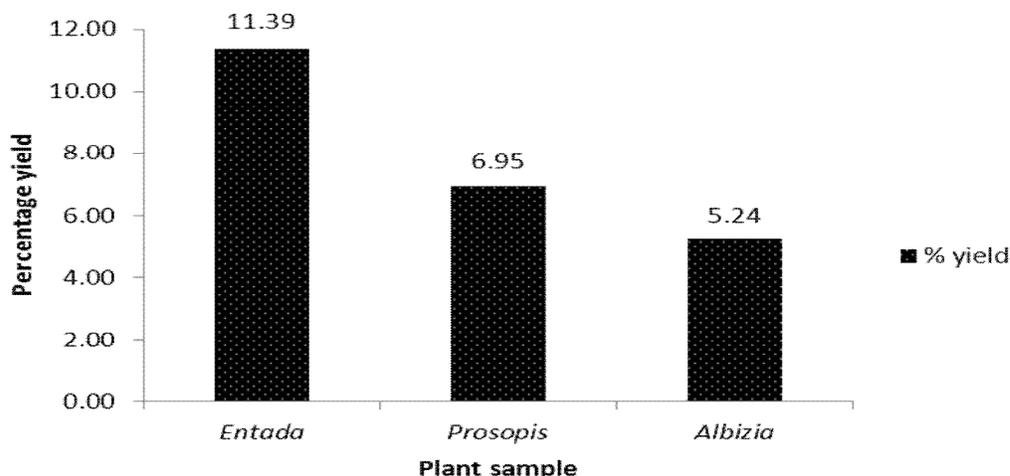


Figure 1: Percentage yields of ethanol extracts of *Entada leptostachya*, *Prosopis juliflora* and *Albizia anthelmintica*

3.2 Results for Egg-Hatch Inhibition (EHI) Assay

Mixed nematode eggs containing *Haemonchus spp.*, *Trichostrongyle spp.* and *Oesophagostomum spp.* were used for EHI assay. The plant extracts showed concentration-dependent anthelmintic activities in inhibiting egg hatching as shown in Figure 2. From Table 1, of the three plants, *Prosopis juliflora* showed the highest anthelmintic activity ($LC_{50}=0.251$ mg/ml) while *Albizia anthelmintica* showed the least activity ($LC_{50}=0.330$ mg/ml). There were no statistically significant differences ($P>0.05$) in the activities of the plant extracts compared to albendazole ($LC_{50}=0.245$ mg/ml).

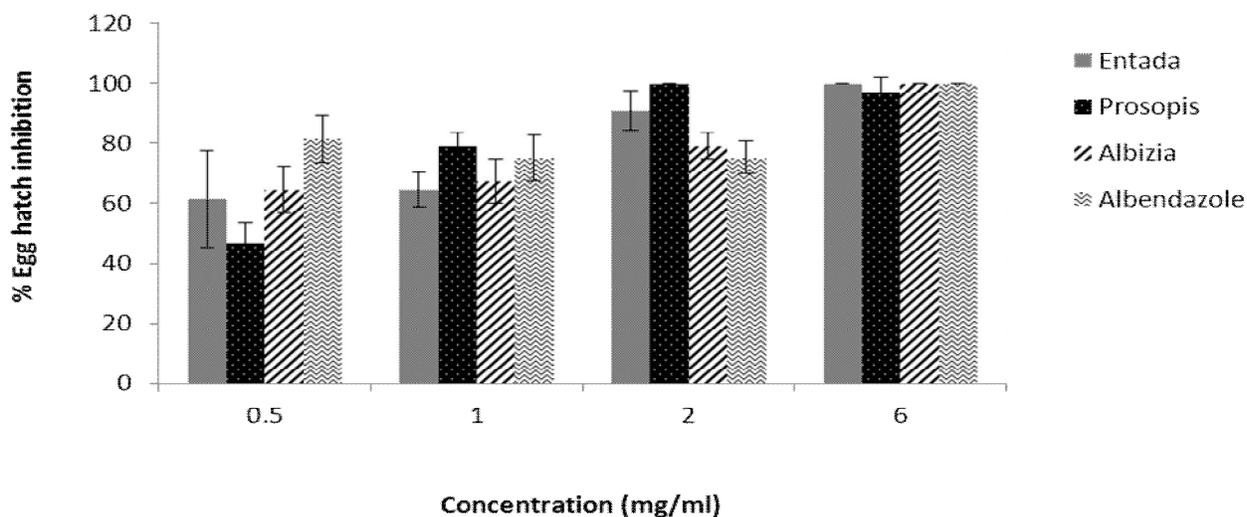


Figure 2: In vitro egg-hatch inhibition assay of *Entada leptostachya*, *Prosopis juliflora* and *Albizia anthelmintica* at the concentrations of 0.5, 1, 2 and 6mg/ml

Table 1: LC₅₀ values of *Entada leptostachya*, *Prosopis juliflora* and *Albizia anthelmintica* at 95% confidence limit with the upper and lower boundaries

Plants and control	95% confidence limits for concentration (mg/ml)		
	LC ₅₀	Lower boundary	Upper boundary
<i>Entada leptostachya</i>	0.317	0.168	0.498
<i>Prosopis juliflora</i>	0.251	0.127	0.401
<i>Albizia anthelmintica</i>	0.330	0.178	0.509
Albendazole	0.245	0.119	0.400

There was also high positive correlation of the activities of the extracts when compared to albendazole as shown in Table 2. This shows that the anthelmintic activities of the test plants compared very well with albendazole.

Table 2: Paired samples correlations (Plant extracts vs Albendazole) of *Entada leptostachya*, *Prosopis juliflora* and *Albizia anthelmintica*

Paired samples	Correlation, R ²
<i>Entada leptostachya</i> and Albendazole	0.967
<i>Prosopis juliflora</i> and Albendazole	0.979
<i>Albizia anthelmintica</i> and Albendazole	0.963

Other similar work on numerous herbal plants has been reported. *In vitro* anthelmintic activity study on *Terminalia arjuna* bark showed a dose dependent anthelmintic activity against *Haemonchus contortus* ova with an LC₅₀ value of 0.646 mg/ml (Zafar *et al.*, 2009). A similar trend was observed with the *in vitro* anthelmintic activity of ethanolic plant extracts from Northern Cameroon on inhibition of *Haemonchus contortus* eggs (Monglo *et al.*, 2006).

The anthelmintic activities of the plants under investigation can be attributed to the presence of phytochemicals antagonistic toward gastro-intestinal nematodes. Some of the phytochemicals known to be active against gastro-intestinal nematodes include polythienyls, isothiocyanates, glucosinolates, cyanogenic glycosides, polyacetylenes, alkaloids, lipids, terpenoids, sesquiterpenoids, diterpenoids, quassinoids, triterpenoids, simple and complex phenolics (Chitwood, 2002), thymol (Lateef *et al.*, 2006), steroids (Badmanaban and Patel, 2010), saponins (Kareru, 2008), tannins (FAO, 2006; Githiori, 2004; Ramalingam *et al.*, 2010) amongst other classes of phytochemicals. Saponins were first reported to kill worms as early as 1962 by Watt and Brayer, using an extract from *Albizia anthelmintica* (Kareru, 2008). Sesquiterpene and kosotoxins have also been isolated from the bark and root bark extracts of *Albizia anthelmintica* (Hussain, 2008). Kareru (2008) reported the presence of triterpenes, tannins, saponins and glycosides in *Entada leptostachya* while triterpenes, saponins, tannins and anthraquinones (bound) were found in *Albizia anthelmintica*. Phytochemical studies have revealed presence of saponins, tannins, flavonoids and alkaloids in *Prosopis juliflora*. These phytochemicals could have been responsible for their anthelmintic activities.

4.0 Conclusion

Egg hatch inhibition assay has shown that the ethanol extracts of *Entada leptostachya*, *Albizia anthelmintica* and *Prosopis juliflora* exhibit *in vitro* anthelmintic activity that is sufficiently comparable to albendazole and therefore have potential as novel anthelmintic drugs for control of gastro-intestinal nematodes in ruminants.

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