

Cristiano Boiti · Adriana Ferlazzo
Alberto Gaiti · Antonio Pugliese *Editors*

Trends in Veterinary Sciences

Current Aspects in Veterinary
Morphophysiology, Biochemistry,
Animal Production, Food Hygiene
and Clinical Sciences

 Springer

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Contents

Part I Biology and Reproduction

- 1 Seasonal Effect on Hematological and Innate Immune Parameters in Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*)** 3
Francesco Pascoli, E. Negrato, C. Poltronieri,
G. Radaelli and D. Bertotto
- 2 Effect of Altitude on Plasma Serotonin Levels in Horses** 9
G. Bruschetta, P. Di Pietro, M. Miano,
C. Cravana and A. M. Ferlazzo
- 3 Identification of Aquaporin 1 in *Diplodus sargus*** 15
G. Zanghì, S. Campo, A. D'Ascola, A. Germanà
and A. M. Ferlazzo
- 4 Effect of Dephosphorylation on Donkey Milk Caseins** 21
S. Vincenzetti, A. Vita, F. M. Carpi, D. Micozzi and P. Polidori
- 5 Distribution Pattern and Chemical Coding of Sympathetic Trunk Ganglia Neurons Supplying the Boar Urinary Bladder Trigone** 27
F. Gazza, M. Botti, L. Ragionieri, C. Sorteni, D. Russo,
P. Clavenzani, R. Chiocchetti, L. Bo Minelli and R. Panu
- 6 In Vivo Applications of Mesenchymal Stem Cells and Platelet-Rich Plasma to Improve Tendon Regeneration in Sheep** 31
M. Patruno, I. Bronzini, L. Maccatrozzo, A. Perazzi, I. Iacopetti,
G. M. De Benedictis, S. Testoni, A. Negro, F. Mascarello
and T. Martinello

7	Plasma Fatty Acid Profiles During the First Year in Dogs with and without Hip Dysplasia: Preliminary Results	35
	L. Tidu, N. Bacciu, G. Rucco, S. Nardi, M. Santoro and B. Renaville	
8	Signaling in Sperm Activation: A Common Strategy for Different Organisms	41
	I. Saponaro, N. Bernabò and M. Mattioli	
9	Tenogenic Differentiation of Ovine Amniotic Stem Cells Co-Cultured with Tenocytes	45
	Valentina Curini, V. Russo, O. Di Giacinto, A. Mauro, E. Galiffa, A. Pomante and B. Barboni	
10	Cortisol Changes in Pregnant and Post-Partum Ewes: Effects of Single or Twin Births	51
	E. Fazio, M. Manera, S. Mignacca, P. Medica and A. Ferlazzo	
 Part II Animal Pathology		
11	Papillary and Chordoid Meningioma in the Dog: Morphological Findings and Histological Grading	57
	S. Pavone and M. T. Mandara	
12	Detection of Neutralizing Antibodies in Pigs Inoculated with an Inactivated Vaccine Against Porcine Circovirus Type 2 (PCV2)	63
	S. Petrini, M. Paniccià, V. Silenzi, F. Ciuti, M. Bresaola, M. Fortunati, G. M. De Mia, G. Perugini and M. Ferrari	
13	<i>Mycobacterium avium</i> subsp. <i>paratuberculosis</i> as an Emergent Pathogen in Raw Ovine Milk Produced in Central Italy	67
	A. R. Attili, V. Ngu Ngwa, L. Pacifici, S. Preziuso, A. Domesi and V. Cuteri	
14	Canine Filariosis in Sardinia: Epidemiological Findings in the Ogliastra Region.	73
	A. Scala, C. Solinas, A. P. Pipia, G. Sanna, A. Varcasia and G. Toscirci	

15	Comparison of Serum and Meat Juice for Detection of Anti-<i>Toxoplasma gondii</i> Antibodies in Hunted Wild Boars (<i>Sus scrofa</i>)	79
	D. Ranucci, F. Veronesi, I. Di Matteo, R. Branciarì, D. Miraglia, C. Marini and D. Piergili Fioretti	
16	<i>Eucoleus aerophilus</i> (syn. <i>Capillaria aerophila</i>) and Other Trichinelloid Nematodes in Dogs from Liguria (Northwest Italy)	85
	F. Macchioni, L. Guardone, M. C. Prati and M. Magi	
17	Helminths in Sheep on Farms of the Basilicata Region of Southern Italy	91
	A. Bosco, L. Rinaldi, V. Musella, D. Pintus, M. Santaniello, M. E. Morgoglione, G. Zacometti and G. Cringoli	
 Part III Pharmacology and Clinical Science		
18	Effects of Veterinary Drugs on Swimming Activity in Two Freshwater Organisms	97
	M. Dalla Bona, V. Di Leva and M. De Liguoro	
19	Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Toxicity in <i>Ostreopsis Ovata</i>: Algal Biotoxins	103
	A. Ferrari, I. Schiavetti, C. Bolognesi, D. Pavino and B. Vivaldi	
20	Aflatoxin M₁ Contamination and Antibacterial Residues in Milk in Kosovo	109
	G. Gallina, A. Rama, L. Lucatello, C. Benetti, D. Bajraktari, K. Uka and C. Montesissa	
21	Heavy Metal Levels in Dog Liver and Kidney in Naples (Campania, Italy)	115
	F. P. Serpe, R. Russo, R. De Luna, S. Florio, M. Esposito and L. Severino	
22	Ultrasonographic Assessment of Abdominal Lymph Nodes in Normal Puppies: Preliminary Results	119
	A. La Pietra and M. De Majo	

23	Changes in the Metabolic Profile and Performance of Dairy Cows Fed Two Dietary Crude Protein Concentrations	125
	D. Bernardini, S. Segato, G. Marchesini, A. L. Stefani, G. Gerardi and I. Andrighetto	
24	Impact of Physical Exercise on Release of Cardiac Troponins: Evaluation in Healthy and Cardiopathic Dogs	129
	M. Pugliese, A. Seminara, M. De Majo, A. La Pietra and P. P. Niutta	
25	Canine Erythrocyte Morphology: Observations of a New Pattern, the “Quatrefoil” Erythrocyte	135
	George Lubas, Alessandra Gavazza, Biancaurora Gugliucci, Anna Pasquini and Marianna Ricci	
26	Pain Management in Companion Animals: Medical–Legal Aspects	141
	V. Quartarone, A. Fazio, G. della Rocca, M. Russo and A. Passantino	
Part IV Food Inspection		
27	Increase of TVBN and TMA-N in Skin and Gills of <i>Sparus aurata</i> During Storage	149
	A. Giuffrida, F. Giarratana, D. Signorino, G. Ziino and A. Panebianco	
28	Actin Proteolysis in San Daniele Dry-Cured Ham	153
	M. L. Stecchini, A. Fabbro, M. Spaziani, E. Venir and G. Lippe	
Part V Husbandry and Zootechnic		
29	The Donkey Milk Food Chain: Quality and Certification	159
	Stefano Simonella, Cristina Panetta and Biagina Chiofalo	
30	Effect of Different Rates of Postmortem pH Decline on the Technological Quality of Calabrian Capocollo.	165
	L. Nanni Costa, F. Tassone, S. Dall’Olio, S. Carpino and V. Russo	
31	Preliminary Investigation of the Incidence of Obesity in a Canine Population in the USA	171
	G. Biagi, I. Cipollini, M. Grandi, D. Sarti and G. Zaghini	

32 Administration of Essential Oils Cinnamaldehyde, Eugenol, and Capsicum to Beef Cattle: Effects on Health Status and Growth Performance	177
R. Compiani, C. A. Sgoifo Rossi, A. Pizzi and V. Dell’Orto	
33 Extruded Linseed in the Diet of Grazing Goats: Effects on Milk Conjugated Linoleic Acid	181
Raffaella Tudisco, S. Calabrò, M. I. Cutrignelli, M. Grossi, N. Musco, V. Piccolo and F. Infascelli	
Index	187

Part I
Biology and Reproduction

Chapter 1

Seasonal Effect on Hematological and Innate Immune Parameters in Sea Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*)

Francesco Pascoli, E. Negrato, C. Poltronieri, G. Radaelli and D. Bertotto

Abstract The temperate aquatic environment is affected by two primary seasonal components, temperature and photoperiod. Many organisms respond to seasonal change physiologically, behaviorally or both. The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of seasonality on cortisol, hematological, and innate immune parameters in European sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) reared under traditional semi-intensive aquaculture. Sea bass were reared in an outdoor pond. Serum cortisol, hematocrit, leucocrit, serum lysozyme activity, and total glutathione (GSH) were monitored bimonthly for 14 months. An effect of seasonality was observed for all parameters, with generally higher values in summer and lower values in winter. These results could improve the understanding of the influence of seasonal cues on the immune system and the stress response in fish, to optimize husbandry practices.

Keywords Fish · Innate immunity · Cortisol · Hematology

1.1 Introduction

In the literature, there are numerous studies on the influence of seasonality on fish physiology. The temperate aquatic environment is influenced throughout the year by two main seasonal cues, temperature and photoperiod (Morgan et al. 2008). In fish, seasonality coordinates reproduction, affects body weight and

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physiological status, regulates food intake and locomotion, and is thought also to coordinate the immune response (Bowden et al. 2007). In general, physiological parameters are reduced in winter and raised in summer (Bowden et al. 2007).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of seasonality on growth, cortisol, immunological, and hematological parameters in sea bass reared according to conventional semi-intensive method over a period of 14 months.

1.2 Materials and Methods

Juvenile sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) were reared in an outdoor tank from May 2009 to July 2010 and monitored every 2 months (initial weight 69 g; final weight 350 g; stocking density 2–12 kg/m³). At each sampling, 20 animals were caught and measured (total and standard length and weight) to observe growth and condition factor (K). Blood samples were collected from the caudal vein. Serum cortisol analysis was carried out by radioimmunoassay (RIA), as described by Simontacchi et al. (2008). Hematocrit and leucocrit were obtained by microcentrifugation of whole blood (12,500 rpm for 5 min). Serum lysozyme activity was measured by a turbidimetric assay, as described by Parry et al. (1965). Total glutathione (GSH) was determined by an enzymatic assay adapted to microtiter plate (Baker et al., 1990).

1.3 Results

Weight increased from 69.1 ± 3.0 g to 345.5 ± 13.6 g after 14 months. During this period, the condition factor worsened from 1.02 ± 0.03 to 1.21 ± 0.01 , with the lowest values in December 2009, January 2010, and March 2010 (0.94 ± 0.02 , 0.94 ± 0.02 , and 0.95 ± 0.02 , respectively) and a significant increase in May and July 2010 (1.22 ± 0.02 and 1.21 ± 0.01 , respectively).

Serum cortisol was significantly higher in May 2009, May 2010, and July 2010 compared to the other months ($p < 0.05$; Fig. 1.1). The lowest levels were recorded in October and December 2009, and January and March 2010 ($p < 0.05$).

The hematocrit was significantly lower in January and March 2010 than the other samples ($p < 0.05$; Fig. 1.2). The leucocrit was significantly lower in December 2009, January 2010, and March 2010 compared to the other months ($p < 0.05$; Fig. 1.3). The highest value was recorded in October ($p < 0.01$).

Serum lysozyme activity increased from May to October 2009, then decreased until January 2010 and increased again after that point (Fig. 1.4). The lowest values were recorded in January ($p < 0.01$). Higher values were found in July 2010 than in May, July, and December 2009 and March 2010, but these were not significantly different from those in October 2009 and May 2010.

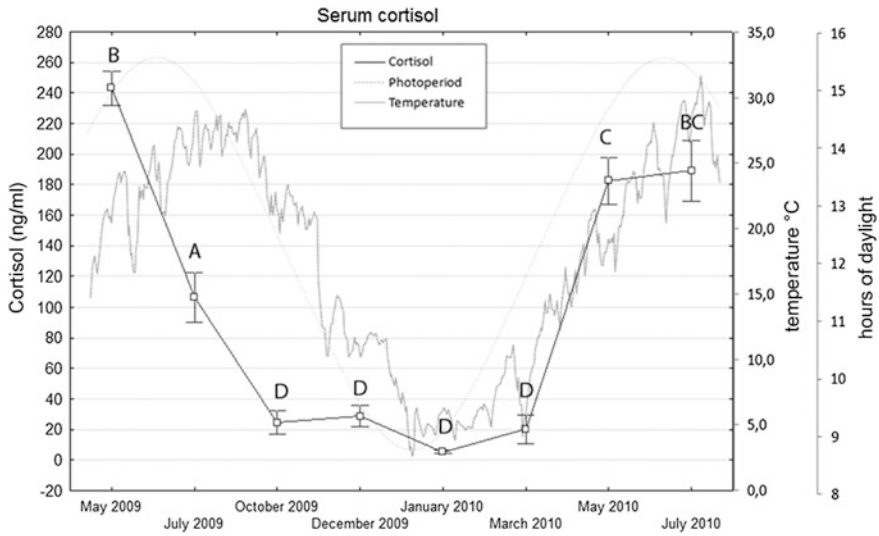


Fig. 1.1 Variations in serum cortisol of sea bass over a 14-month period (mean ± SE). Different letters indicate significant differences ($p < 0.05$)

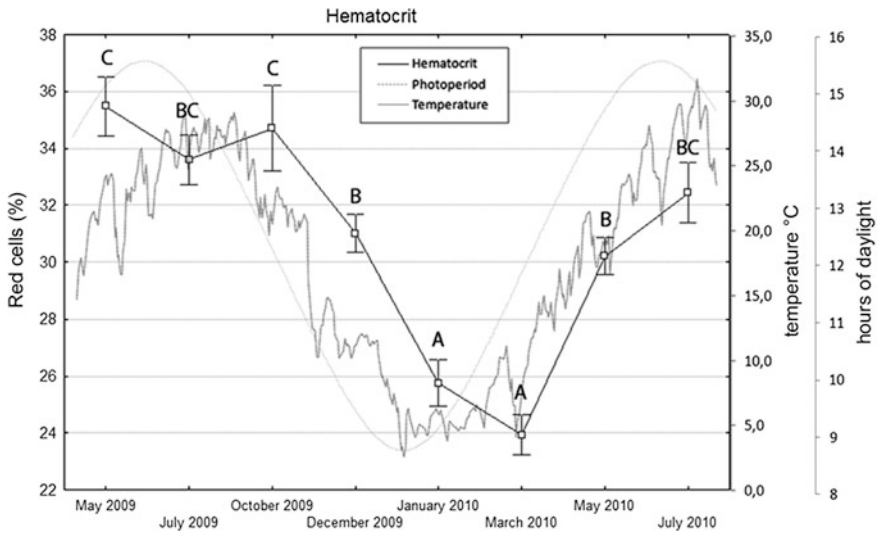


Fig. 1.2 Variations in hematocrit of sea bass over a 14-month period (mean ± SE). Different letters indicate significant differences ($p < 0.05$)

The GSH decreased from July to December 2009 and then increased until July 2010 (Fig. 1.5). The lowest values were found in October and December 2009 and January and March 2010, and the highest were in July 2010 ($p < 0.05$).

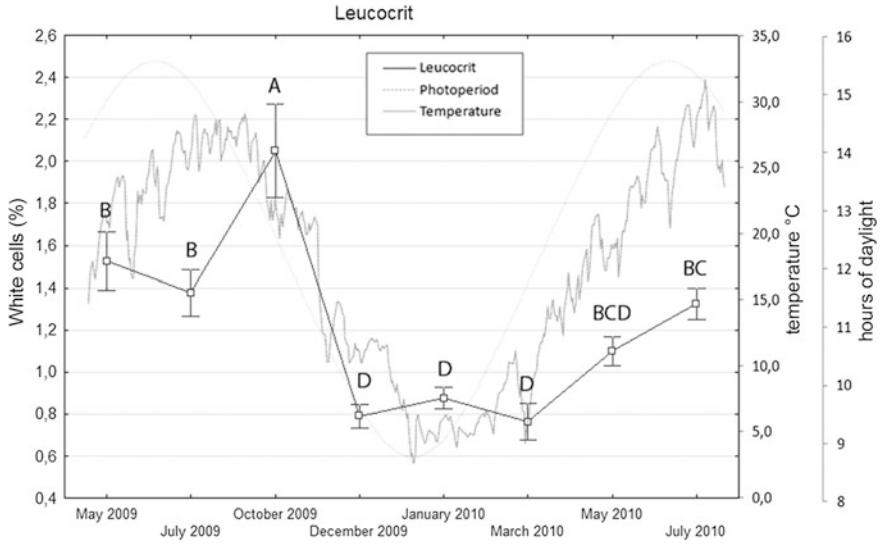


Fig. 1.3 Variations in leucocrit of sea bass over a 14-month period (mean \pm SE). Different letters indicate significant differences ($p < 0.05$)

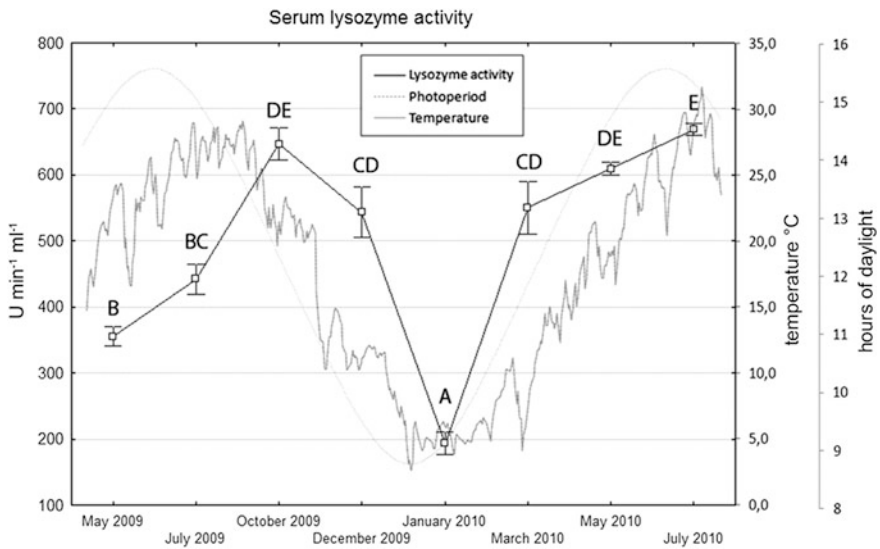


Fig. 1.4 Variations in serum lysozyme activity of sea bass over a 14-month period (mean \pm SE). Different letters indicate significant differences ($p < 0.05$)