SUNSHINE AGRICULTURE
e-Newsletter

ISSN (E): 2583 – 0821

Sun. Agri.:e- Newsletter, (2024) *4*(5), 10-12

Article ID: 309

Toxicity and Lethal Effects of Herbaceous Plant Crude Extracts against *Spodoptera litura*

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Open Access

Available online at
http://sunshineagriculture.vitalbiotech.org/

Article History
Received: 15. 05.2024
Revised: 17. 05.2024
Accepted: 21. 05.2024

INTRODUCTION

Spodoptera litura, commonly known as the tobacco caterpillar, is a significant agricultural pest that affects a wide variety of crops, including cotton, tobacco, and various vegetables. The pest's ability to develop resistance to conventional chemical insecticides has prompted researchers to explore alternative control methods, including the use of botanical insecticides derived from herbaceous plants. These plant-based extracts are considered environmentally friendly and are known for their low toxicity to non-target organisms (Singh & Gandhi, 2023; Bapatla et al., 2023).

This article examines the toxicity and lethal effects of crude extracts from various herbaceous plants against *Spodoptera litura*, with a focus on recent experimental data and findings.

Herbaceous Plant Extracts Studied

Researchers have identified several herbaceous plants that exhibit insecticidal properties against *Spodoptera litura*. Some of the most studied plants include:

1. **Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)** - Known for its potent insecticidal properties due to the presence of azadirachtin (Singh & Gandhi, 2023).
2. **Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*)** - Contains nicotine alkaloids that act as neurotoxins in insects (Bapatla et al., 2023).
3. **Garlic (*Allium sativum*)** - Contains sulfur compounds that exhibit toxic effects on pests (Singh et al., 2023).
4. **Lantana (*Lantana camara*)** - Rich in terpenoids and phenolic compounds with insecticidal properties (Gandhi & Bapatla, 2023).
5. **Chili Pepper (*Capsicum annuum*)** - Contains capsaicin, which is toxic to many insect species (Singh & Gandhi, 2023).

Experimental Data and Findings

The toxicity of these plant extracts has been tested in various concentrations against different developmental stages of *Spodoptera litura*. Researchers have used both laboratory and field studies to evaluate the efficacy of these extracts.

Table 1: Toxicity of Herbaceous Plant Extracts Against *Spodoptera litura* Larvae (Singh & Gandhi, 2023)

Plant Species	Active Ingredient	LC50 (µg/mL)	LC90 (µg/mL)	Mortality Rate (%)
Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)	Azadirachtin	12.5	35.0	87
Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*)	Nicotine	20.0	50.5	80
Garlic (*Allium sativum*)	Allicin	15.2	40.3	75
Lantana (*Lantana camara*)	Terpenoids/Phenolics	10.8	28.7	82
Chili Pepper (*Capsicum annuum*)	Capsaicin	18.0	45.2	78

LC50 and **LC90** represent the lethal concentrations required to kill 50% and 90% of the *Spodoptera litura* larvae, respectively. The mortality rate indicates the percentage of larvae killed at the highest tested concentration.

Table 2: Time to Mortality After Exposure to Herbaceous Plant Extracts (Bapatla et al., 2023)

Plant Species	Concentration (µg/mL)	Mean Time to Mortality (Hours)	Mortality Rate (%)
Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)	25	48	87
Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*)	30	60	80
Garlic (*Allium sativum*)	20	72	75
Lantana (*Lantana camara*)	15	36	82
Chili Pepper (*Capsicum annuum*)	20	54	78

This table shows that Lantana (*Lantana camara*) extract was the most effective in terms of reducing the mean time to mortality, indicating rapid toxicity against *Spodoptera litura*.

Mechanisms of Action

The insecticidal activity of these herbaceous plant extracts is attributed to various mechanisms:

1. **Neem Extracts**: Azadirachtin disrupts the hormonal system of insects, leading to inhibited growth, reproduction, and eventually death (Singh & Gandhi, 2023).
2. **Tobacco Extracts**: Nicotine alkaloids act on the nervous system of insects, causing paralysis and death (Bapatla et al., 2023).
3. **Garlic Extracts**: Allicin and other sulfur compounds interfere with cellular respiration in insects, leading to energy depletion and mortality (Singh et al., 2023).
4. **Lantana Extracts**: Terpenoids and phenolic compounds disrupt the digestive system of insects, leading to starvation and death (Gandhi & Bapatla, 2023).
5. **Chili Pepper Extracts**: Capsaicin affects the sensory neurons of insects, causing irritation, paralysis, and death (Singh & Gandhi, 2023).

Field Studies and Practical Applications

Field studies have shown that the application of these plant extracts can significantly reduce *Spodoptera litura* populations in crops such as cotton and vegetables. For instance, a field trial conducted by Singh and Gandhi (2023) demonstrated that neem oil, when applied at a concentration of 2%, reduced *Spodoptera* *litura* infestation by 85% in a cotton field over a 14-day period. Similarly, Bapatla et al. (2023) reported that tobacco leaf extract sprayed on tomato plants reduced larval damage by 75% compared to untreated controls.

Table 3: Field Efficacy of Herbaceous Plant Extracts Against *Spodoptera litura* (Singh et al., 2023)

Plant Species	Application Rate (%)	Reduction in Infestation (%)	Crop Yield Increase (%)
Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)	2.0	85	25
Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*)	1.5	75	20
Garlic (*Allium sativum*)	1.0	70	18
Lantana (*Lantana camara*)	1.2	80	22
Chili Pepper (*Capsicum annuum*)	1.0	78	21

These field results indicate that herbaceous plant extracts are effective in reducing pest populations and improving crop yields.

Environmental and Non-Target Impacts

One of the major advantages of using herbaceous plant extracts is their low toxicity to non-target organisms, including beneficial insects like pollinators and predators of pests (Singh et al., 2023). Additionally, these extracts tend to degrade rapidly in the environment, reducing the risk of long-term contamination (Bapatla et al., 2023).

However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of these extracts can vary depending on environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity, and further research is needed to optimize their application in different agricultural settings (Gandhi & Bapatla, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The use of herbaceous plant crude extracts as a botanical insecticide offers a promising alternative to chemical pesticides in controlling *Spodoptera litura*. The data from both laboratory and field studies demonstrate the effectiveness of these extracts in reducing pest populations and improving crop yields. Additionally, their low environmental impact makes them a viable option for sustainable agriculture. Future research should focus on optimizing formulations and application methods to enhance their efficacy and broaden their use in integrated pest management (IPM) programs (Singh & Gandhi, 2023; Bapatla et al., 2023).

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