

Studies on Pasteurellosis in birds

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Abstract

Two hundred pooled samples including (liver, heart and spleen) were collected from examined 454 dead birds that were suspected to be infected with fowl cholera. These birds were collected from 132 poultry farms from different governorates. Eight isolates could be biochemically identified as *Pasteurella* spp. Using PCR, all isolates were identified as *Pasteurella multocida* (*P. multocida*) capsular type A with overall incidence of 1.76%. The incidence of avian pasteurellosis in Sharkya (4%) was higher than that in Qalioubia (1.38%). The incidence of isolation of *P. multocida* from examined chickens was 2.2 (8 out of 360 chickens) while it could not be isolated from duck and turkey samples. *Pasteurella multocida* could be isolated only from layers chickens.

Key words: *Pasteurella multocida* in birds, PCR capsular typing, fowl cholera, Avian pasteurellosis, Histopathological changes of *Pasteurella*.

Introduction

Avian pasteurellosis has been reported as an important disease in domestic poultry for more than 200 years that causes devastating economic losses to poultry industry worldwide (Aye *et al.*, 2001). *P. multocida* is a Gram negative bacterium infects a wide range of birds causing fowl cholera in poultry (Glisson *et al.*, 2003) which is generally caused by serotype A: 1, A: 3 or A: 4.

Diagnosis of fowl cholera is based on clinical signs, pathological findings and isolation and identification of *P. multocida* (Rimler and Glisson, 1997).

Conventional methods of characterizing isolates of *P. multocida* are often time consuming and don't type all strains. Recently, DNA-based identification and typing systems are emerging as reliable alternatives, providing rapid identification of pathogens. (Blackall and Miflin 2000).

The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) has the potential to detect low numbers of a target organism in heavily contaminated samples. Several PCR tests have been described for detection or identification of *P. multocida* species (Kasten *et al.*, 1997; Townsend *et al.*, 1998 and Miflin and Blackall, 2001).

The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of *P. multocida* among chicken, duck and turkey samples in Egypt and the pathogenicity of the isolated organism in 12 week old layers.

Material and methods

Samples

A total of 200 freshly dead birds of different ages suspected to be infected with fowl cholera were collected from 132 different poultry farms (120 chicken farms, 7 duck farms and 5 turkey farms) from different localities at Qalubia, Sharkya, Minofia, Assuit and Gharbya Governorates, Egypt. (table-1 and 2).

Heart, liver and spleen were pooled from each bird. Heart blood smears, tissue impression smears from liver were prepared and stained with Leishman stain. Heart blood and tissues were subjected to bacteriological examination for isolation of *P. multocida*.

Bacterial isolation and identification

The heart blood and tissue samples were inoculated into brain heart broth (Oxoid) and incubated at 37°C for 18 hrs. Then subcultured on blood agar, MacConkey agar (Quinn *et al.*, 1994) and DAS media

(DAS 1958) and incubated at 37°C for 24 hrs for growth of *P. multocida*. The suspected

colonies were subjected to biochemical tests for identification of *P. multocida* (Cruickshank et al., 1975; Quinn et al., 1994 and Holt et al., 1994).

Pathogenicity in mice

Pure isolates were tested for pathogenicity to white mice. According to Balakrishnan and Parimol (2012) as following 0.2ml of brain heart broth culture (108 C.F.U /ml) were inoculated intraperitoneally in mice and observed for 48 hr. Dead mice were subjected to post mortem examination and re-isolation of the inoculated organism. Dead mice without signs and lesions were proved to their positive mortality.

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) for identification of *P. multocida*

DNA was extracted from the overnight culture of *Pasteurella* isolates using QIAamp DNA Mini Kit Catalogue no.51304. *P. multocida* polymerase reaction (PM-PCR) was carried out using species specific primers KMT ISP6 and KMT 177 designed by Townsend et al., (1998) to amplify KMT1 gene. The analysis of PCR product was carried out in 1.5 % agarose stained with ethidium bromide (10mg/ml) .100bp DNA ladder and appropriate controls were incorporated to rule out false positive and false negative results. The gel was viewed under UV transillumination.

Pathogenicity of the isolated *P. multocida* in chickens

Freshly prepared culture from *P. multocida* strain (108cfu/0.5ml) (Petersen et al., 2001) was inoculated intratracheally into 12 week old layer type chickens (within 30s). The experimental birds were kept under observation for 14 days for clinical signs and/or mortality. At the end of observation all survived birds were sacrificed for lesions, re-isolation and/or histopathological examination.

Results and Discussion

P. multocida has been consistently found in the upper respiratory tract, spleen, lungs, blood and liver of infected birds (Rhoades, 1964; Hunter and Wobeser,

1980). All isolates were non hemolytic and had bipolarity.

The results of the present study revealed the isolation of 8 (2.2%). *P. multocida* isolates out of 200 samples, collected from freshly dead chickens, ducks and turkeys from different localities at Qalioubia, Sharkya, Minofia, Assuit and Gharbya provinces in Egypt.

The presence of such organisms in these bird species reflects the distribution of the disease (Avian cholera) in these governorates. The isolation of *P. multocida* from poultry population in Egypt was reported earlier by Abd El-Dayem(1990);Ibrahim (1991); Gergis et al. (1992);Bebars(2000); Hassan et al. (2001);El-Shamy (2008) and Hekal (2009). The low isolation percentages in this study may be due to the fact that most of our samples were not taken from birds in the acute stage of the infection which agrees with the findings of Mraz et al., (1980), who found a higher prevalence of *P. multocida* in convalescent chicken flocks than in disease free flocks, or could be attributed to the uncontrolled use of antibiotics in nearly all farms.

For isolation of *P. multocida* from freshly dead birds on DAS media (DAS 1958), blood agar, brain heart infusion agar and MacConkey agar. (Carter, 1967 and Cruickshank et al., 1975).

Table (1): The prevalence of avian Pasteurellosis in different localities in Egypt.

Governorates	No. of examined farms	No. of examined suspected birds	<i>P. multocida</i> positive isolates	
Qalioubia	75	298	4	1.38%
Sharkeya	34	100	4	4%
Minofia	14	42	0	0%
Assuit	4	11	0	0%
Gharbya	5	13	0	0%
Total	132	451	8	1.76%

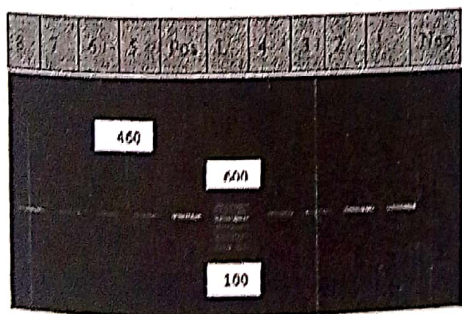
Table (2): The prevalence of avian Pasteurellosis according to different avian species.

Species	No. of examined farms	No. of examined birds	Incidence of avian pasteurellosis in different species	
Chicken	120	360	8	2.22%
Duck	7	21	0	0%
Turkey	5	9	0	0%
Total	132	454	8	1.76%

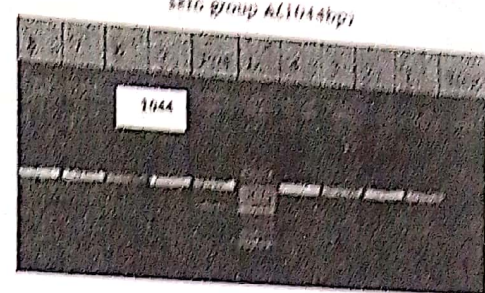
The mice pathogenicity test is often used to detect *P. multocida* in samples contaminated with other microorganisms (Quan et al., 1986). White mice injected I/P with *Pasteurella multocida* strain succumbed within 24hrs (Kasten 1997). However, virulence for mice has been reported to be variable (Curtis et al., 1980). 8 strains isolated from chickens were highly pathogenic for mice. All mice died within 18-24 hours of inoculation. These results agreed with the findings of Jaya Kumar, (1998) and Balakrishnan and Parimol (2012) who recorded that *Pasteurella multocida* isolated from cases of fowl cholera were highly virulent for mice.

P. multocida species specific polymerase specific PCR (PM-PCR) assay developed by Townsend et al., (1998) was used in this study to identify *P. multocida* isolates by amplifying the gene encoded by clone KMT1 of *P. multocida*. The primer pair KMT1SP6-KMT1T7 amplified a product of 455 bp from all tested isolates. (fig 1)

Fig(1): PCR amplified products of *P. multocida* isolates (Lane L: 100bp DNA ladder, Lane POS control positive, Lane Neg control negative and lane 1-8 the isolates.)



Fig(2): PCR amplified products of *P. multocida* sero group A/D/44bp



Purushothaman et al.,(2008) detected *P. multocida* by the use of PCR technique. A nucleic acid based diagnostic test has been found to be more sensitive and reliable than the conventional method. The main advantages of the nucleic acid based tests are that they reduce the time consumption and allow detection of the organism's genome even if it is in minute quantities, thus increasing sensitivity and specificity of the test (Innis et al., 1990). PCR is one such test that can be used for the identification of organisms at any level, viz: strain, species, genus or all members of a domain, just by using a specific primer sequence. (Bhimani et al., 2014).

Within this investigation, *P. multocida* isolates were characterized serologically by the capsule serogroups with molecular serotyping. Carter and his colleagues (Carter and Rappay 1963 and Carter and Chengappa 1981) identified 5 serotypes (A, B, D, E and F) apparently on the basis of differences in the capsular substances. These results agreed with those reported by Karmyet al. (1983), Abd El-Motelib and Salem (1986), Akeila et al. (1986) and Kuczkowskiet al. (2006). Also Shivachandra et al. (2006) isolated 72 strains of *P. multocida* from chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese and quails typed them in "A" and "D" serogroups. All isolates were *P. multocida* serogroup A (Fig. 4). *P. multocida* isolates obtained from chickens mostly belong to serotype A and cause avian pasteurellosis, with incidences of high mortality and morbidity in infected farms, causing significant economic losses all over the world (Rhoades and Rimler, 1989).

Townsend et al., (2001) and Mohamed and Moeman (2012) reported that PCR and multiplex PCR for capsular type detection were found to be a rapid and sensitive

method. The pathogenicity of the isolated *P. multocida* strains was tested in 12 week old chickens. An inoculation dose of approximately 2×10^8 C.F.U./0.5ml of the isolate *P. multocida* was used. The post mortem lesions were recorded. Moderate clinical signs and no mortality could be observed in experimental chickens infected with the isolated organisms although the same inoculated killed mice within 24 hrs.

Mariana and Hirst (2000) isolated five *Pasteurella* organisms pathogenic for mice.

Glisson et al (2003) reported that pathogenicity or virulence of *P. multocida* in relation to fowl cholera is complex and variable depending on the strain, host species and variations within the strain or the host and condition of contact between the two. Mature chickens are more susceptible than young ones and turkeys are much more susceptible

than chickens to infection with *P. multocida* (Heddlston, 1962).

Intratracheal inoculation of approximately 104 C.F.U. of the strain isolated from an outbreak of fowl cholera in wild birds including eiders, cormorants, oyster-catchers and gulls, was highly virulent for turkeys (100% mortality), Partridges (91% mortality) and pheasants (38% mortality), while chickens were found to be much more resistant (no mortality). The finding is in accordance with previous observations showing that turkeys of all ages were highly susceptible to *P. multocida* infections, while chickens under 16 weeks of age were resistant (Rimler and Glisson 1997). Six - to fourteen weeks-old chickens, however have subsequently been found susceptible to intra tracheal inoculation with *P. multocida* (Scott et al., 1999 and Wilkie et al., 2000).

The routes by which *P. multocida* gains entry to the body during outbreaks of avian cholera are presently unknown, but there is a prevailing belief that *P. multocida* is a respiratory pathogen (Simensen and Olson 1980 and Gustafson et al., 1998). For this reason, an intra-tracheal challenge model was used in the present investigation. The inoculation dose of approximately

104 C.F.U./0.5ml is considered to be a low dose (Matsumoto et al., 1991).

Intratracheal inoculation of chickens aged six-to fourteen weeks old showed that 107 to 108 C.F.U. were required to achieve greater than 75% mortality (Scott et al., 1999). A universally accepted model using a standardized i.t. dose in chickens and other avian species of the same age would be useful for comparative studies of virulence. Mbuthia et al., (2008) studied the clinical signs after experimental infection of chickens with *P. multocida* in relation to age group. They found that no birds died during the experiments, although all chickens except two (16 weeks old) expressed clinically signs of fowl cholera at some points during 14 day observation.

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دراسات على الباستيريلا في الدجاج

الملخص

تم تجميع 200 عينة جمعوها من اعضاء (كبد وقلب وطحال) من 454 طائر ميت محتمل اصابتهم ببستيريلا الطيور. تم اختبار العينات للعزل والزرع على اجار الدم والاداس ميديا. تم الحصول على 8 معزولات وتم تصنيفهم بالتفاعلات الكيميائية الحيوية عمل اختبار الضراوة في الفئران ووراثيا بتفاعل انزيم البلمرة المتسلسل باستخدام الجين KMT1SP6 and KMT177 وهجين خاص بالباستيريلا مالتوسيدا. كشف التصنيف الجزيئي ان جميع العزلات تنتمي الى نوع A .

تمقى معزولات من الباستيريلا مالتوسيدا تم تصنيفهم من 200 طائر ميت بمعدل كانت نسبة عزل باستيريلا مالتوسيدا من نجاة بياضة 61.7% . وكانت اكبر نسبة عزل من الشرقيه 4% اكبر من القلوبيه 1.38% . اكبر نسبة عزل من الدجاج 2.2% . لم يتم التمكن من الحصول على معزولات للبستيريلا مالتوسيدا من البط والديك الرومي والدجاج التسمين تحت ظروف عملنا في هذا البحث.