



Egg Production, Blood Profile, and Histopathology in Japanese Quail with Phytogetic Additives

R. Murwani^{a,b,*}, R. Anggraeni^{a,b}, M. H. Muslih^a, A. O. Yogantara^a, & Mulyono^c

^aLaboratory of Physiology and Biochemistry, Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Animal and Agricultural Sciences, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang

^bNatural Product Laboratory, UPT Laboratorium Terpadu, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang

^cLaboratory of Animal Nutrition and Feed Science, Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Animal and Agricultural Sciences, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang
Jl. Prof Soedarto Tembalang, Semarang 50275, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: rmurwani.undip@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effect of combining phytogetic *Curcuma aeruginosa* Roxb powder with *C. xanthorrhiza* standardized extract or with *Anredera cordifolia* leaf powder in an antibiotic-free diet on the egg production, red and white blood cell profile, fecal endoparasite, serum biochemistry, and intestinal and liver histopathology of Japanese quails. Four hundred eight-month-old Japanese quails were raised in 5-tier cages, randomly allocated into four treatments, namely: T0 (standard diet), T1 (standard diet plus 1% *C. aeruginosa* Roxb rhizome powder), T2 (standard diet plus 1% *C. aeruginosa* Roxb rhizome powder and *C. aeruginosa* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin), and T3 (standard diet plus 1% *C. aeruginosa* Roxb powder and 1% *A. cordifolia* leaf powder). The data were analyzed using variance analysis (ANOVA). Duncan's test was carried out at a 5% significant level when a significant effect was found. The results showed that weekly egg production was not affected by phytogetic addition, but egg production significantly increased on the last day of treatment ($p < 0.05$). Combining 1% *C. aeruginosa* Roxb and 1% *A. cordifolia* significantly increased ($p < 0.05$) erythrocytes, hemoglobin, hematocrit, leukocytes, lymphocytes, serum glucose, uric acid, creatinine, and AST. However, their values remained within the normal range of Japanese quails. No endoparasites were found in the fecal samples. The addition of phytogetic did not affect the height of intestinal villi and crypt depth ($p > 0.05$). Interestingly, intestinal inflammation levels were reduced significantly in T1 and T2 compared to the control, while T3 was the same as the control ($p < 0.05$). An elevated liver score was found (1 score higher) in T2 ($p < 0.05$). This study suggests that phytogetic additives can help reduce normal intestinal inflammation (due to harsh intestinal environment) and improve the performance of laying Japanese quail, especially in the absence of endoparasites or infection.

Keywords: *Anredera cordifolia*; *Curcuma aeruginosa*; *Curcuma xanthorrhiza*; health indices; laying potential; quail

INTRODUCTION

Japanese quail is a dual-purpose livestock, producing animal protein from meat and eggs, and is widely raised by the local community globally. In Indonesia, the most commonly raised strain of quail is *Coturnix coturnix japonica*. Increased population and nutrition knowledge led to the growth demand for quail eggs. Egg consumption from quails in Indonesia was 9,177 eggs/unit in 2018 (Livestock and Animal Health, 2019). Environmental challenges, such as sudden climate change, viral and parasite infections in egg-producing birds, can lower their productivity, and many phytogetic additives have replaced antibiotic growth promoters (AGP). Furthermore, many studies showed the negative consequences of AGP (Murwani & Bayuardhi, 2007;

Murwani, 2008a). Therefore, a search for natural substitutes of AGP and natural phytogetic that benefit poultry production is continuously being developed and studied, and many products have reached the market to maintain livestock productivity.

The phytogetic include the use of naturally occurring phytochemicals of feed ingredients such as sorghum seeds (Murwani, 2008b); from botanical such as stem extract of *Scrulla oortiana* (Murtini *et al.*, 2010), the fruit extracts of *Anacardium occidentale* (Tanod *et al.*, 2015), ethanol extract of *Ficus carica* (Sukowati *et al.*, 2019), and *Aegle marmelos* (L) (Sumardi *et al.*, 2021), *Arecha catechu* L seed powder and the leaf of *Anredera cordifolia* (Marlani *et al.*, 2017; Kusumanti & Murwani, 2018; Murwani *et al.*, 2022), and there are many more of other reported studies. One of the phytogetic additives

actively still being researched is *Curcuma aeruginosa*, locally named “Temu hitam” or black curcuma. It has an antibacterial, antiparasitic, and anticancer (Akarchariya *et al.*, 2017; Aziz *et al.*, 2021; Fitria *et al.*, 2019; Sari & Supratman, 2022). The tannin components can kill and break the life cycle of larvae and eggs of parasitic intestinal worms of laying hens (Vanda *et al.*, 2020). The curcumenol, isocurcumenol, germacrone, curcumin, demethoxycurcumin, phenols, tannins, and saponins can weaken the liver worm’s muscle and lead to its death. The ethanol extract of *C. aeruginosa* Roxb contains essential oils, flavonoids, tannin, polyphenols, and curcumin (Jose & Thomas, 2014). The antioxidant of phenolic compounds, flavanols, and proanthocyanidins can prevent cell damage from free radicals (Septaningsih *et al.*, 2018; Burapan *et al.*, 2020; Simoh *et al.*, 2018; Nurcholis *et al.*, 2017). A 1.25% and 1.5 % black ginger flour given to Peking ducks reduced feed consumption and conversion, increased weight gain, and serum HDL cholesterol (Syaefudin *et al.*, 2016). *C. aeruginosa* juice extract at 0.5%-1.5% can increase total leukocytes, phagocytosis activity, reduce mortality due to pathogenic *V. alginolyticus* and *V. parahaemolyticus* in tiger grouper (Setyati *et al.*, 2019). In contrast, several studies showed the toxicity of *C. aeruginosa*. Increased *C. aeruginosa* dosages (10 ppm, 100 ppm, and 1000 ppm) produced higher toxicity in shrimp larvae (Fitria *et al.*, 2019; Mustariani *et al.*, 2017). The toxic effect was due to the alkaloids, saponins, and flavonoids on the stomach and feed recognition receptors (Zulfiah *et al.*, 2020). The polyphenol content can also reduce protein synthesis in the liver (Maksudi *et al.*, 2018). The administration of *C. aeruginosa* extract at a dose of 32.5 mg/kg body weight showed the presence of central vein congestion, degeneration, and necrosis of liver cells, interfering with liver function in detoxification (Hestianah *et al.*, 2014).

C. xanthorrhiza rhizome, locally named “Temulawak,” has been a medicinal herbal supplement since ancient times (Rahmat *et al.*, 2021). The administration of fresh decoction of *C. xanthorrhiza* in rats given paracetamol showed no changes in liver color compared to the control group with paracetamol, only having changes in liver color and necrosis (Pramono *et al.*, 2018). Meanwhile, the administration of the extract increases the antioxidant status essential in the detoxification process in the liver and kidneys (Devaraj *et al.*, 2014). The extract contains xanthorizol, which stimulates liver cells to produce bile fluid and maintain liver function in protein synthesis (Rahmat *et al.*, 2021). Tetrahydro curcuminoid is one of the metabolites of curcumin and has the most potent antioxidants (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Curcumin can improve cellular redox status and activate NF-E2-related factor 2 (Nrf2), vital in suppressing oxidative stress (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Related to the potential benefit of *C. aeruginosa* as a feed additive, but on the other hand, it is also potentially toxic, it is hypothesized that when combined with hepatoprotective curcumin from a commercial standardized *C. xanthorrhiza* extract, it could offset the potential toxicity of *C. aeruginosa*.

Anredera cordifolia leaves, locally named “Binahong,” contain flavonoids, saponins, and tannins

with antibacterial and anti-fungal activity (Indarto *et al.*, 2019). The bioactive can disrupt pathogenic *Vibrio cholerae* growth (Sari *et al.*, 2020), inhibiting *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus* mediated by cell wall permeability damage (Maryana *et al.*, 2019). The antibacterial function of *A. cordifolia* leaf can increase carcass percentage by reducing pathogenic bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract, improving its function and resistance to infection (Alba *et al.*, 2020; Leliqia *et al.*, 2017). Administration of *A. cordifolia* extract showed no segmentation of glomerular cells, reducing alanine aminotransferase (ALT) and aspartate aminotransferase (AST) levels (Leliqia *et al.*, 2017). At 150 mg/Kg BW, *A. cordifolia* extract can repair cell damage (Sukandar *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, *A. cordifolia* has a “wound healing” activity and protects liver function (Marlani *et al.*, 2017; Murwani *et al.*, 2022; Yuniarti & Lukiswanto, 2017). This study was conducted by considering both the beneficial *C. aeruginosa* as an anti-bacterial and anti-parasite and its potential toxicity, combined with the hepatoprotective curcumin from *C. xanthorrhiza* extract or with *A. cordifolia* leaves. Therefore, the effect of combining phytogetic *Curcuma aeruginosa* Roxb with standardized *C. xanthorrhiza* extract (200 ppm curcumin) or with *A. cordifolia* into an antibiotic-free diet was investigated on the blood cell profile, fecal endoparasite, serum biochemistry, intestinal and liver histopathology of eight-month-old laying quails, along with its impact on egg production.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research protocol has received ethical commission approval with Ethical Approval Number 036/EA/KEPK-FKM/2023.

Phytogetic Materials

All fresh phytogetic samples were identified at the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics, Universitas Diponegoro (UNDIP). *Curcuma aeruginosa* obtained from local markets was washed, drained, and skin peeled. The clean rhizome was sliced thinly, air-dried, and ground into a fine powder. The *C. xanthorrhiza* extract was purchased from an official pharmacy store. It contains standardized curcumin 20 mg/tablet (Curcuma Force, SOHO Global Health from *C. xanthorrhiza* extract). The extract is in tablet form and ground into a fine powder before use. Meanwhile, *A. cordifolia* leaves were obtained from a horticulture center in Magelang Regency. They were washed, drained, cut into small pieces, dried, and ground into fine powder. For phytogetic addition to the standard quail diet, the ready-to-use phytogetic additives were mixed with the diet until homogeneous, and the mix was molded into a pellet. Each treatment additive was mixed into the commercial quail feed according to experimental designs.

Experimental Design

This study was carried out at one of the quail farms in Semarang City, which has a capacity of 3,000 birds.

From the 3,000 birds, 400 eight-month-old Japanese quails with an initial weight of ± 202.5 g were randomly placed in eight 5-tier wood cages. Each tier cage is 64 x 46 cm and can house ten birds. It is equipped with free access to feed and drinking water. The diet was a quail layer PP3 from PT. Cargill and its composition and nutritional content are presented in Table 1 (antibiotic-free feed). A completely randomized design with four treatments, namely T0: Control (antibiotic-free feed with no additives), T1: antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder; T2: antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin); T3: antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 1% *A. cordifolia* leaf powder was carried out. Each treatment consisted of ten replicates, with ten birds in each replicate. The treatment was given for four weeks. Sanitation of the quail housing was done twice daily, in the morning and afternoon.

Egg Production and Feed Conversion Ratio

Egg production was recorded daily from each replicate (10 birds) of each group, and the average weekly egg production was calculated. The egg production on the final day of phytogenic treatment was also presented in the Results. The feed conversion ratio (FCR) is obtained from the feed consumed divided by the egg's weight.

Red and White Blood Cell Profile and Serum Biochemical Determination

One bird from each group's replicate was taken for blood profile determination; blood was drawn via the jugular vein. Blood was directly placed in a vacutainer containing EDTA. Determination of erythrocytes, hematocrit, hemoglobin, leukocytes, lymphocytes, eosinophils, and neutrophils was carried out using the electrical impedance method using PRIMA© (Fully Auto Hematology Analyzer), which works automatically with

Table 1. Composition and nutrient content of quail layer rations – PP3*

Nutrients	Nutrient content (Feed label) ^a	Proximate analysis
Moisture	12%	8.99%
Crude protein	19%–22%	19.88%
Ash	14%	12.30%
Crude fat	7%	7.66%
Energy from fat	-	68.94 Kcal/100g
Carbohydrate	-	51.40%
Total energy	-	354.02 Kcal/100g
Crude fiber	7%	-
Calcium	2.5%–3.5%	-
Phosphorus	0.6%–1.0%	-
Aflatoxin	40 ppb	-

Note: ^aPT. Cargill New Zealand, 2020.

Proximate analyses by an accredited laboratory, 2020.

Feed ingredient composition: Yellow corn, rice bran, soybean meal, meat and bone meal, vegetable oil, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidant premix.

a dilution process and hemolyzing (diluting the sample with 26 mL diluent and 0.35 mL lyse reagent). All data were processed by a microprocessor and displayed on the monitor screen. The Analyzer can count the Red Blood Cell, Hemoglobin, Hematocrit, Mean Corpuscular Volume (MCV), Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin (MCH), and Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin Concentration (MCHC) and differentiate leukocytes into lymphocytes, eosinophils, and neutrophils.

For serum biochemical determination, another bird from each replicate of each group was taken, and blood was placed in a vacutainer without EDTA. The serum was separated by centrifugation at 4000 rpm for 10 minutes, collected in an Eppendorf tube, and stored frozen until analyses. The serum samples were determined by photometric method (Microlab 300 Photometer at a wavelength (λ) 516 nm) (Sukowati *et al.*, 2019; Murwani *et al.*, 2022).

Histopathology

After sacrificing the bird, the liver and small intestine were removed and stored in 10% NBF (Neutral Buffer Formalin). The histopathological slides were prepared using the paraffin method (4–5 μ m thickness) with Hematoxylin – Eosin staining (Murtini *et al.*, 2010; Murwani *et al.*, 2022). A histopathologist analyzed the samples. Intestines were observed for villus and crypt height and inflammation level (the level of infiltrating inflammatory cells). The intestinal inflammation was scored as "1" (inflammatory cell infiltration 0–25% of the entire visual field), "2" (inflammatory cell infiltration 26–50% of the entire visual field), "3" (inflammatory cell infiltration 51–75% of the entire visual field) and "4" (inflammatory cell infiltration >75% of the entire visual field). Liver histopathology was scored "1" normal (polygonal cells appear, homogeneous red cytoplasm, clearly defined cell walls), "2" parenchymatous degeneration (cell swelling accompanied by cloudy and granular cytoplasm), "3" hydropic degeneration (swollen cells, fluid accumulation and there are many vacuoles) and "4" necrosis (permanent cell damage or cell death).

Collection of Fecal Samples, Parasite Identification, and Enumeration

At the end of the experiment, fresh feces were collected from each replicate (10 birds per replicate) of each treatment. Each replicates fecal sample was mixed thoroughly, sampled approximately 25 grams with a sterile spoon, and preserved in 10% formalin for endoparasite determination (Murwani *et al.*, 2022). The parasite identification and enumeration were made by experienced staff at the Laboratory of Animal Health Semarang City, Regional Office of Animal Husbandry and Health.

Statistical Analyses

The data were analyzed using variance analysis (ANOVA) to determine the effect of the phytogenic ad-

ditives. When a significant effect was found, Duncan's test was carried out. A p-value < 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance.

RESULTS

The effects of phytogenic addition on egg production, feed consumption, and feed conversion ratio (FCR) of Japanese quail are presented in Table 2. Of phytogenic addition, combined 1% *C. aeruginosa* with 1% *A. cordifolia* (T3) significantly increased (p<0.05) feed consumption and feed conversion ratio but not egg production. However, on the last day of the experiment,

egg production significantly increased (p<0.05) with the combined additives.

The effects of phytogenic additives on the erythrocytes and leukocyte profiles are presented in Table 3. It showed that both of the combined phytogenic additives significantly increased (p<0.05) the erythrocytes, hemoglobin, hematocrit, leucocytes, lymphocytes, eosinophils, and neutrophils, while MCV, MCH, and MCHC were not affected. No endoparasites were found in the fecal samples.

The effect of phytogenic additives on serum biochemistry is presented in Table 4. It showed that the phytogenic significantly affected (p<0.05) glucose, uric

Table 2. Feed consumption, feed conversion ratio, and egg production of eight-month-old Japanese quail during phytogenic supplementation for 4-weeks

Variables	Treatments				p
	T0	T1	T2	T3	
Feed consumption (g)					
Week 1	20.95 ± 1.91	21.00 ± 1.32	20.93 ± 2.14	20.88 ± 1.15	0.99
Week 2	22.89 ± 1.56	21.96 ± 1.53	22.22 ± 2.34	22.13 ± 1.37	0.65
Week 3	23.25 ± 2.87	23.64 ± 1.37	23.66 ± 1.86	24.08 ± 0.71	0.81
Week 4	21.49 ± 2.72 ^a	21.41 ± 2.28 ^a	21.91 ± 1.74 ^{ab}	23.71 ± 0.72 ^b	0.05*
FCR					
Week 1	1.95 ± 0.16	1.92 ± 0.38	1.94 ± 0.16	1.97 ± 0.12	0.97
Week 2	2.11 ± 0.12	2.11 ± 0.12	2.07 ± 0.18	2.09 ± 0.12	0.89
Week 3	2.13 ± 0.23	2.26 ± 0.14	2.19 ± 0.19	2.24 ± 0.06	0.32
Week 4	1.97 ± 0.25 ^a	2.03 ± 0.22 ^a	2.04 ± 0.18 ^a	2.23 ± 0.07 ^b	0.03*
Egg production (%)					
Week 1	77.65 ± 11.91	76.66 ± 7.72	79.43 ± 10.42	79.57 ± 9.09	0.89
Week 2	80.46 ± 11.99	80.63 ± 8.15	78.29 ± 9.71	81.38 ± 10.36	0.92
Week 3	77.69 ± 6.72	81.30 ± 8.55	78.87 ± 9.14	80.74 ± 8.50	0.75
Week 4	75.92 ± 8.79	76.24 ± 5.18	81.05 ± 7.02	81.83 ± 7.02	0.17
Last day of the experiment	63 ± 14.94 ^a	64 ± 10.75 ^a	71 ± 9.94 ^{ab}	79 ± 8.76 ^b	0.01*

Note: Each value is the average of ten replicate birds. Means in the same row with different superscripts differ significantly (p<0.05). T0= Control (antibiotic-free feed with no additives), T1= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *Curcuma aeruginosa* powder; T2= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 200 ppm curcumin, T3= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 1% *Anredera cordifolia* leaf powder.

Table 3. The erythrocyte, leucocyte profile, and endoparasites of eight-month-old Japanese quails after phytogenic addition for 4-weeks

Variables	Treatments				p
	T0	T1	T2	T3	
Erythrocyte profile					
Erythrocytes (10 ⁶ /μL)	3.68 ± 0.40 ^{bc}	3.52 ± 0.68 ^c	4.31 ± 0.76 ^a	4.60 ± 1.02 ^a	0.00*
Hemoglobin (g/dL)	14.00 ± 1.89 ^b	13.85 ± 2.36 ^b	16.63 ± 3.17 ^a	16.95 ± 2.62 ^a	0.01*
Hematocrit (%)	50.50 ± 5.31 ^{bc}	47.93 ± 8.89 ^c	58.55 ± 10.96 ^b	62.30 ± 12.87 ^a	0.00*
MCV (fl)	138.08 ± 2.63	136.94 ± 6.44	137.38 ± 4.49	136.57 ± 7.11	0.94
MCH (pg)	36.15 ± 5.64	38.92 ± 2.20	38.82 ± 3.25	37.74 ± 3.58	0.36
MCHC (g/dL)	27.62 ± 1.50	28.55 ± 1.57	28.41 ± 2.41	27.77 ± 2.75	0.71
Leukocyte profile					
Leukocytes (x10 ³ /mm ³)	138.03 ± 43.65 ^c	128.70 ± 36.18 ^c	190.80 ± 65.65 ^b	241.20 ± 34.56 ^a	0.00*
Lymphocytes (x10 ³ /mm ³)	135.95 ± 43.00 ^b	127.40 ± 35.72 ^b	188.83 ± 64.63 ^a	373.75 ± 418.99 ^a	0.00*
Neutrophils (thousand/mm ³)	2.08 ± 1.20	1.30 ± 0.54	1.98 ± 1.13	2.45 ± 0.72	0.06*
Eosinophils (%)	0	0	0	0	-
Endoparasites	Not found	Not found	Not found	Not found	-

Note: Each value is the average of ten replicate birds. Means in the same row with different superscripts differ significantly (p<0.05). T0= Control (antibiotic-free feed with no additives), T1= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *Curcuma aeruginosa* powder; T2= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 200 ppm curcumin, T3= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 1% *Anredera cordifolia* leaf powder. MCV= mean corpuscular volume; MCH= mean corpuscular hemoglobin; MCHC= mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration.

acid, creatinine, and AST. Glucose levels increased in T1 and T2 and were significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher than control. Uric acid levels increased in T2 and T3, and T3 was significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher than control. However, T2 was similar to T1 and T0 ($p < 0.05$). Creatinine and AST levels in T1, T2, and T3 were significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher than in control.

Table 5 and Figure 1a show that the intestinal villi height and crypt depth were not affected by phyto-genic additives ($p > 0.05$). Interestingly, inflammation levels in T1 and T2 were reduced compared to the control, while T3 was the same as the control (Figure 1b). An elevated liver scoring was found (1 score higher) in T2 ($p < 0.05$) and illustrated in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

Feed Consumption, Feed Conversion Ratio, and Egg Production

In the fourth week, the combined 1% *C. aeruginosa* with 1% *A. cordifolia* significantly increased ($p < 0.05$) feed consumption and feed conversion ratio in T3 (2.23 compared to T0 1.97) but not egg production. Other studies in laying quails (Ashour *et al.*, 2020; Herve *et al.*, 2019; Mat *et al.*, 2021; Özbilgin & Kara, 2023) have shown

that a good feed conversion ratio ranges from 2.8 to 4.6. Therefore, the increase in FCR in T3 was still lower than 2.8, which signifies a good FCR. Interestingly, egg production was significantly increased in T3 on the last day of the experiment ($p < 0.05$). The possible mechanism of increased egg production was discussed in the erythrocyte profile.

Erythrocyte Profile

Combined *C. aeruginosa* powder with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) or with *A. cordifolia* leaf powder significantly increased total erythrocytes count ($p < 0.05$) (Table 2). The possible mechanism of action of the combined phyto-genic additive on erythrocytes may be explained by the absorption of the bioactive components (phenolic and flavonoid) of the combined phyto-genic in the small intestine, which then carried by circulation and reach the bone marrow in adult birds. In the bone marrow, the bioactive component might stimulate the erythropoietin hormone (Zheng *et al.*, 2011), triggering the production of erythrocytes (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, the phenolic and flavonoid contents could increase the antioxidant status of the erythropoiesis-associated organs (liver, kidney, and bone marrow) and help protect those organs by

Table 4. Serum biochemistry of eight-month-old Japanese quail after phyto-genic supplementation for 4-weeks

Variables	Treatments				<i>p</i>
	T0	T1	T2	T3	
Triglyceride (mg/dL)	1315.61 ± 478.54	1150.65 ± 553.18	1215.64 ± 432.65	1169.52 ± 370.78	0.86
HDL (mg/dL)	31.43 ± 7.15	32.19 ± 7.90	36.82 ± 11.04	31.13 ± 6.92	0.41
LDL (mg/dL)	67.83 ± 25.48	77.78 ± 18.49	80.61 ± 37.24	69.15 ± 16.32	0.62
Cholesterol (mg/dL)	174.12 ± 46.93	162.27 ± 34.40	192.30 ± 36.29	171.67 ± 51.43	0.47
Glucose (mg/dL)	153.81 ± 25.44 ^a	278.34 ± 81.26 ^b	327.61 ± 54.54 ^c	190.90 ± 26.43 ^a	0.00*
Uric acid (mg/dL)	4.14 ± 1.18 ^a	4.36 ± 1.48 ^a	5.47 ± 1.81 ^{ab}	6.66 ± 2.81 ^b	0.02*
Bilirubin (mg/dL)	0.16 ± 0.08	0.11 ± 0.07	0.14 ± 0.06	0.24 ± 0.22	0.12
Creatinine (mg/dL)	0.29 ± 0.04 ^a	0.35 ± 0.08 ^b	0.36 ± 0.03 ^b	0.37 ± 0.05 ^b	0.00*
ALT (U/L)	14.16 ± 10.69	15.92 ± 12.03	11.46 ± 5.87	12.50 ± 8.38	0.73
AST (U/L)	197.32 ± 104.55 ^a	295.66 ± 47.99 ^b	278.10 ± 99.89 ^b	283.82 ± 31.07 ^b	0.03*

Note: Each value is the average of ten replicate birds. Means in the same row with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < 0.05$).

T0= Control (antibiotic-free feed with no additives), T1= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *Curcuma aeruginosa* powder; T2= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 200 ppm curcumin, T3= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 1% *Anredera cordifolia* leaf powder. ALT= alanine aminotransferase, AST= aspartate aminotransferase, HDL= high density lipoprotein, LDL= low density lipoprotein.

Table 5. Intestinal and liver histopathology of eight-month-old Japanese quail after phyto-genic supplementation for 4-weeks

Variables	Treatments				<i>p</i>
	T0	T1	T2	T3	
Crypt depth (µm)	63.65 ± 10.67	61.44 ± 10.71	72.74 ± 15.54	74.30 ± 19.34	0.14
Height of villi (µm)	777.87 ± 180.38	766.03 ± 181.43	711.95 ± 119.98	767.64 ± 184.48	0.81
Intestinal inflammation	2.23 ± 0.32 ^a	1.30 ± 0.40 ^b	1.13 ± 0.28 ^b	2.23 ± 0.32 ^a	0.00*
Liver scoring	1.10 ± 0.23 ^a	1.00 ± 0.00 ^a	2.73 ± 0.34 ^b	1.10 ± 0.23 ^a	0.00*

Note: Each value is the average of ten replicate birds. Means in the same row with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < 0.05$).

T0= Control (antibiotic-free feed with no additives), T1= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *Curcuma aeruginosa* powder; T2= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 200 ppm curcumin, T3= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 1% *Anredera cordifolia* leaf powder.

Intestinal inflammation Level: "1" Inflammatory cell infiltration 0%–25% of the entire visual field, "2" Inflammatory cell infiltration 26%–50% of the entire visual field, "3" Inflammatory cell infiltration 51%–75% of the entire visual field and "4" Inflammatory cell infiltration >75% of the entire visual field.

Liver Scoring: "1" Normal (polygonal cells appear, homogeneous red cytoplasm, clearly defined cell walls), "2" Parenchymatous degeneration (cell swelling accompanied by cloudy and granular cytoplasm), "3" Hydropic degeneration (swollen cells, fluid accumulation and there are many vacuoles) and "4" Necrosis (Permanent cell damage or cell death).

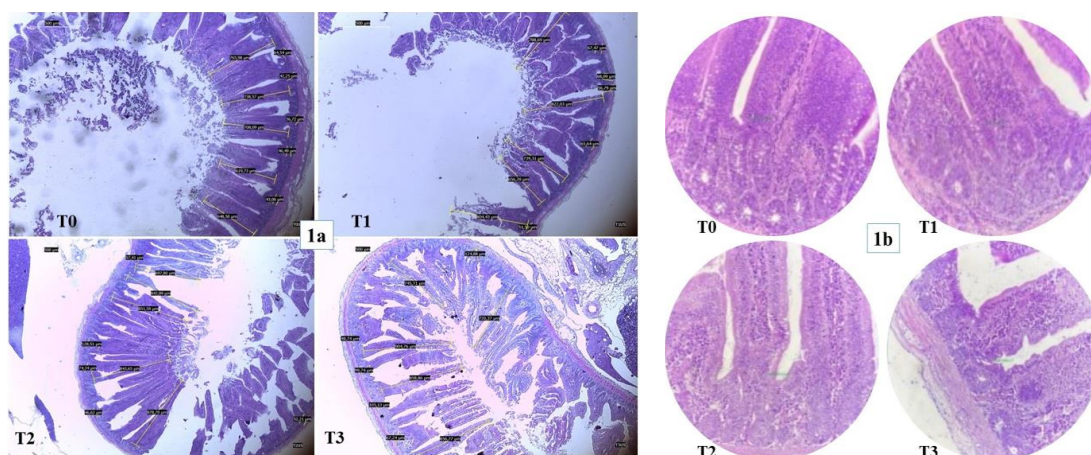


Figure 1. Intestinal histopathology of eight-month-old Japanese quails after phytogetic supplementation for 4-weeks (1a. Crypt depth and villi height with their values in Table 5, 1b. The intestinal inflammation level with the scoring in Table 5). T0= Control (antibiotic-free feed with no additives), T1= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *Curcuma aeruginosa* powder; T2= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 200 ppm curcumin, T3= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 1% *Anredera cordifolia* leaf powder.

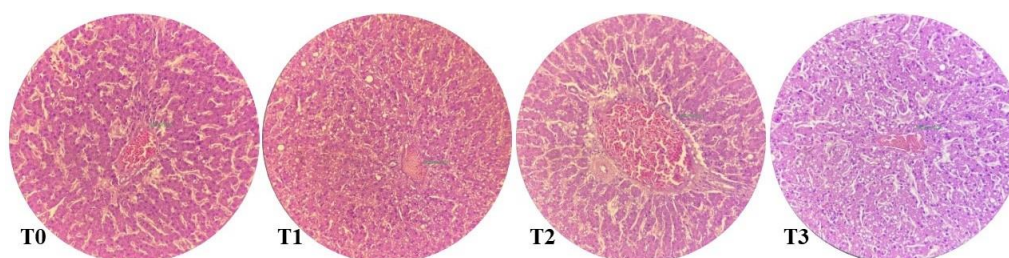


Figure 2. Liver histopathology of eight-month-old Japanese quails after phytogetic supplementation for 4-weeks. Liver scoring was given in Table 5. T0= Control (antibiotic-free feed with no additives), T1= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *Curcuma aeruginosa* powder; T2= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 200 ppm curcumin, T3= antibiotic-free feed + 1% *C. aeruginosa* powder + 1% *Anredera cordifolia* leaf powder.

suppressing lipid peroxidation, scavenging free radicals, and subduing proinflammatory cytokines (Al-Khayri *et al.*, 2022; Farzaei *et al.*, 2018; Vargas *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Although the bioactive components of the other studies, flavonoids formononetin, ononin, calycosin, and calycosin-7-O-b-Dglucoside (Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Zheng *et al.*, 2011) were different from the combined phytogetic additives used in this study, it may exert the same effect. Further studies are needed to test this possibility.

The lifespan of avian erythrocytes is 28–45 days, after which they grow old and are recycled (Matos & Morrisey, 2021). In the Japanese quail *Coturnix coturnix*, the mean survival of erythrocytes is 34 days (Scanes, 2022). The liver, lymph, bone marrow, and macrophages will take these circulating old erythrocytes and break them down into their components. An overhaul of old erythrocytes occurs with the decomposition of hemoglobin into globin and heme, which would become amino acids and iron, respectively. The iron is stored in the liver as ferritin, while iron in transferrin form is transported through the circulation for reuse in synthesizing red blood cells in the bone marrow (Scanes, 2022). The hemoglobin binds and transports oxygen and carbon dioxide. Erythrocyte count is aligned with hemoglobin level, as shown in Table 2, and hence, O₂ content

(Scanes, 2022). Increased erythrocytes and hemoglobin are within the normal range, which improves oxygen supply to fulfill quail metabolism required during laying. Metabolism for egg synthesis or production is therefore supported, followed by an increase in egg production due to the combined supplementation of phytogetic additives shown in T2 and T3 (Table 4) at the end of the experiment.

Hematocrit is the percentage of red blood cells in the blood. Its level indicates the blood's ability to transport oxygen. When the level reaches above average, it may indicate a state of dehydration. This is due to decreased blood volume and increased erythrocytes, causing plasma leakage while the solid remains in the blood vessels (Edi *et al.*, 2020). However, if the number is below average, it may indicate anemia. Hematocrit is related to the viscosity of blood. Higher viscosity can increase blood flow resistance, increasing the liver's workload in pumping blood and interfering with perfusion (Lenz *et al.*, 2007). The hematocrit range in other Japanese quail studies was 22.75–51.33% (Agina *et al.*, 2017; Alagawany *et al.*, 2020; Anggraeni *et al.*, 2016; Olgun *et al.*, 2020; Wardiny *et al.*, 2012). The results that combining *C. aeruginosa* with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin), or *A. cordifolia*, increased the erythrocytes

number, hemoglobin, and hematocrit significantly without affecting the erythrocyte index (MCV, MCH, MCHC) is somewhat a novel and unique discovery. The erythrocyte index is used to determine anemia; therefore, as it is not affected and is within the normal range, it indicates that the quail's oxygen requirement is fulfilled and in good condition.

Leukocyte Profile

Birds have five types of leukocytes: lymphocytes, neutrophils, eosinophils, monocytes, and basophils. Their circulating concentrations can shift by physiological and pathological factors (Scanes, 2022). Leukocyte count in the control group ($T_0 = 138.03 \times 10^3/\text{mm}^3$), as shown in Table 2, was higher than in other studies in Japanese quail aged between 6 to 20 weeks ($10.56 - 25.50 \times 10^3/\text{mm}^3$) (Agina *et al.*, 2017; Scanes, 2022). The difference could be due to the older age of the quails in our study (32 weeks). Factors affecting the leukocyte number in animals include age, sex, environmental conditions (such as stress and antigen challenge), management, and nutrition, whose roles significantly affect leukocyte formation and immune response (Abdul-Majeed & Abdul-Rahman, 2021; Ayoola *et al.*, 2015; Koutsos & Klasing, 2014). This study demonstrates that combining *C. aeruginosa* with standardized *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm curcumin) (T_2) or with *A. cordifolia* (T_3) significantly increased leukocyte number ($p < 0.05$). Increased leukocyte number is a normal response to the stimulation of the immune system by antigens from pathogens or stress (Scanes, 2022). However, leukocytes comprised several subsets: lymphocytes, neutrophil/heterophil, and eosinophil.

Lymphocytes in birds (B and T cells) are the subsets of leukocytes that play roles in humoral and cell-mediated immunity, responding to and eliminating foreign antigens (Scanes, 2022). In this study, the absence of endoparasites means there was no antigen stimulation to the quail's lymphocytes (Johnson *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the increased number in T_2 and T_3 could indicate that the combined *C. aeruginosa* with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) or *A. cordifolia* might stimulate lymphocyte formation. Lymphocyte number may be reduced following severe viral infection due to the interference of lymphocyte formation (lymphopoiesis) (Guo *et al.*, 2021). It is also sensitive to severe nutrient deficiency (Koutsos and Klasing, 2014). In this study, there was no endoparasite, viral infection, or nutrient deficiency; therefore, increased lymphocyte number (normal range) was most likely due to improved lymphocyte formation (lymphopoiesis). The mechanism of enhanced lymphocyte formation may follow the same path as red blood cell formation mediated by bioactive components, as explained earlier. Laying birds' production period is long; therefore, improved lymphocyte numbers within the upper normal range could benefit the birds.

The bird's neutrophils, known as heterophils, are the primary components of the innate immune system and the most common granulocytes in the inflammatory response to bacterial infections (Genovese *et al.*,

2013). They actively contribute to the inflammation of pathogens by migrating to the inflammation site and producing inflammatory cytokines (Juul-Madsen *et al.*, 2014). Their actions against pathogens are mediated by phagocytosis, antimicrobial peptide release, killing by oxidative burst, attracting lymphocytes, and exerting acute inflammatory response (Scanes, 2022). Their numbers increased because of stressors such as corticosterone, hypoxia, heat stress, transportation, and bacterial challenges (Scanes, 2022). Meanwhile, eosinophils eliminate parasites and respond to allergic substances (Yasuda & Koruda, 2019). Eosinophils also play a role in the wound-healing process. When the number of eosinophils increases, it indicates a faster healing process, while a reduced number indicates slower wound healing and repair (Codon & Berdnikovs, 2020). Table 2 shows that neutrophil and eosinophil numbers were not affected by phytogenic supplementation, suggesting that the active compounds of combining *C. aeruginosa* with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) or with *A. cordifolia* leaves did not cause an inflammatory nor allergic response to the quails.

Endoparasite

The absence of endoparasites in all groups, including the control birds, was unexpected, as egg-producing birds commonly harbor endoparasites (Murwani *et al.*, 2022). The absence of endoparasites could be related to sanitation management, which is done twice daily. Furthermore, drinking water analyses revealed zero *E. coli*. The absence of endoparasite infection benefited the egg-producing birds. A complete blood cell model was created to evaluate the relationship between parasite status, one of which was eosinophils. Activated eosinophils release helminthotoxic reactive oxygen species and granular proteins that can cause direct damage to the parasite and host tissue, modulating the immune response by releasing cytokines and chemokines (Kubas *et al.*, 2022).

Serum Biochemistry Profile

Combined *C. aeruginosa* Roxb with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) or with *A. cordifolia* had no significant effect ($p > 0.05$) on serum lipid profile (triglycerides, HDL_{chol}, LDL_{chol}, and total cholesterol), bilirubin, and ALT. However, the serum glucose, uric acid, creatinine, and AST increased significantly ($p < 0.05$).

The serum glucose level in other Japanese quail studies (Abdul-Majeed & Abdul-Rahman, 2021; Abbas *et al.*, 2017; Bhattacharjee *et al.*, 2021; García *et al.*, 2022; Jumadin *et al.*, 2022; Kabir, 2013; Kamil *et al.*, 2021; Krupakaran, 2013; Mutlu *et al.*, 2021) ranges between 193–450 mg/dL. Therefore, increased glucose level in T_2 (327 mg/dL in T_2) was still within the normal range. In this study, elevated serum glucose by phytogenic additives may be due to enhanced glucose absorption from the digestive tract into the bloodstream. Following this, it would be utilized to generate energy (in the form of

ATP) to fuel the metabolism of phytochemical additives (Bešlo *et al.*, 2023; Murwani, 2021; Stromsnes *et al.*, 2021).

Uric acid is a waste product of metabolism that acts as an antioxidant in preventing lipid peroxidation (Lima *et al.*, 2015). The flavonoid of the phytochemical additive can inhibit the action of free radicals and prevent cell damage. The uric acid metabolism converts allantoin by the urate oxidase enzyme into allantoin, urea, ureidoglycolic, glyoxylic, and urea (El Ridi & Tallima, 2017). Serum uric acid is excreted in the urine as long as renal function is not compromised, while feeds low in sodium (Na) cause reabsorption (Xu *et al.*, 2017). The reabsorption of uric acid in the proximal tubule increases the concentration of uric acid, which can cause several diseases, such as chronic kidney disease and hyperlipidemia (Xu *et al.*, 2017). Failure of the kidney system to secrete uric acid can cause the accumulation of white crystals in the tissue. Increased uric acid can also cause deposition in the blood, urine, and tissues (Dissanayake *et al.*, 2020). The uric acid levels in T0, T1, T2, and T3 range between 4.14–6.66 mg/dL, while the values in other Japanese quail studies were 4.34–4.65 mg/dL (Mokhtarzadeh *et al.*, 2022; Asl *et al.*, 2023; Mutlu *et al.*, 2021). Increased uric acid in T2 and T3 (combined phytochemical) likely indicated an increased metabolic process to excrete bioactive components into uric acid.

Serum creatinine is an indicator that determines the glomerular filtration rate and kidney damage; increased serum creatinine and urea could indicate kidney damage (Dally *et al.*, 2020), depending on their values. Although combined 1% *C. aeruginosa* Roxb with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) or with 1% *A. cordifolia* significantly increased ($p < 0.05$, 0.35–0.37 mg/dL) serum creatinine, the values in other Japanese quail studies were 0.09–4.23 mg/dL (Agina *et al.*, 2017; Al-Shammari *et al.*, 2024; Hamidipoor *et al.*, 2015; Mutlu *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, increased creatinine and uric acid levels with the phytochemical addition remained within the normal range. It also indicated increased kidney activity to metabolize the active phytochemical components (flavonoid, saponin, and tannin). It is known that secondary metabolites such as polyphenols from phytochemical substances are processed by the liver and kidney. Subsequently, the polyphenolic substance is converted into a more hydrophilic form to enable their excretion via bile or urine (Bešlo *et al.*, 2023; Stromsnes *et al.*, 2021).

Serum ALT and AST are indicators of liver cell damage or hepatocyte integrity (Murwani *et al.*, 2022). These enzymes catalyze processes essential for synthesizing urea and gluconeogenesis (Kallas *et al.*, 2021). They are found in the kidney, liver, and skeletal muscles, and to a lesser degree in the spleen, small intestine, and brain, despite the liver having the highest concentration (Moriles & Azer, 2022). These enzymes can leak and become apparent with even the slightest disturbance in the permeability of the hepatocyte membrane, which could be a sign of cell death (Guicciardi *et al.*, 2013).

Serum ALT and AST in other Japanese quail studies ranges from 18.3–146 U/L and 31.25–285.60 U/L, respectively (Abbas *et al.*, 2017; Arif *et al.*, 2022; Asl *et al.*,

2023; Devarasetti *et al.*, 2016; El-Heck *et al.*, 2023; Karimi *et al.*, 2020; Majrashi, 2022; Mokhtarzadeh *et al.*, 2022; Prakash *et al.*, 2017; Sakamoto *et al.*, 2018). Combining *C. aeruginosa* Roxb rhizome with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) or 1% *A. cordifolia* had no significant effect on ALT levels. On the other hand, the phytochemical addition significantly increased the serum AST. Aspartate aminotransferase (AST) is a transaminase enzyme found in the liver, kidneys, skeletal muscles, and lungs (Ndrepepa, 2021), while alanine transferase (ALT) is an enzyme used in protein metabolism in the liver (Yang *et al.*, 2009). ALT and AST measurements are used to determine the presence of abnormalities in the liver cells (Yang *et al.*, 2014). An increase in AST levels, without an increase in ALT, indicated an extrahepatic source (Center, 2023). However, in particular, in animals, AST could be a more sensitive indicator of liver injury (Center, 2023). This study could indicate elevated metabolic activities related to phytochemical bioactive substances in the liver and kidney. These metabolic activities aligned with the increased uric acids in T2 and T3 and creatinine concentrations in T1, T2, and T3, indicating higher metabolic activity in the kidney due to phytochemical metabolism.

Intestinal and Liver Histopathology

Phytochemical addition in the quail's diet did not affect intestinal villi height and crypt depth. However, it significantly reduced inflammation ($p < 0.05$). Intestinal inflammation in T1 (single phytochemical 1% *C. aeruginosa* Roxb rhizome powder) and T2 (combined with 200 ppm *C. xanthorizza* extract) was lower than in the control group, while T3 was comparable to the control group. In the control group, intestinal inflammation could be related to the intestine's role in digestion. The intestinal epithelium experiences constant aggression from the harsh lumen environment and mechanical abrasion that causes high levels of cell death, so all epithelial cells are lost daily in the intestine (Creff *et al.*, 2021). Following injury, the gut employs several responses to help reinstate intestinal epithelial integrity. Restitution is the initial rapid period of re-epithelialization and is a crucial component of intestinal epithelial wound healing that occurs in minutes to hours following damage. Subsequent restitution is the regenerative response, which occurs in the hours to days following injury and is linked to increased proliferation and restitution. The mRNA of cytokine TGF- β 1 is increased within 2 hours following wounding, in line with the increased crypt stem cells and improved epithelial barrier function (Fink & Wrana, 2023). Compared to control, low intestinal inflammation with phytochemical additives could indicate better maintenance of the epithelial barrier due to a harsh intestinal environment. So overall, it benefits the quail's small intestinal condition.

The liver is a central organ for metabolizing carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals and detoxification (Simon *et al.*, 2020; Zaefarian *et al.*, 2019). Combined *C. aeruginosa* Roxb with *C. xanthorizza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) (T2)

significantly increased liver scoring ($p < 0.05$). Increased liver scoring in T2 could be due to the elevation of the liver's metabolic process to convert combined phytochemical bioactive (alkaloid, saponin, flavonoid, polyphenol, and curcumin) into more polar compounds so that it can be excreted. However, liver scoring in T3 is equal to control T0 and T1 (single phytochemical), suggesting that *A. cordifolia* leaf powder could prevent damage to liver cells. Polyphenols in *A. cordifolia* could have significant hepatoprotection by inhibiting inflammation and oxidative stress, downregulating the expression of NF- κ B and CYP2E1 (Li *et al.*, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Overall, combining phytochemical *C. aeruginosa* Roxb with *C. xanthorrhiza* extract (equal to 200 ppm standardized curcumin) or 1% *A. cordifolia* leaf powder given to laying quails with an excellent standard diet, quality drinking water, and good sanitation could improve erythrocytes, hemoglobin, hematocrit, leukocytes, lymphocytes and reduce normal intestinal inflammation, benefiting the producing birds. The combined *C. aeruginosa* Roxb with the *A. cordifolia* increased egg production at the end of four-week experiments. Increased serum glucose, uric acid, creatinine, and AST indicated an elevated metabolic activity of phytochemical bioactive substances in the liver and kidney. This phytochemical still needs further research to be used as a commercial feed additive.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We declare no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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