

Spermatogenic Alterations Induced by Organophosphorus Compounds Profenofos, Chlorpyrifos and Synthetic Pyrethroid Lambada-cyhalothrin in Mice

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ABSTRACT

Background: Fertility is declining in many countries and there has been substantial interest in the potential adverse effects of exposure to environmental hazardous chemicals, including pesticides on male reproduction. The objective of the present study focuses on the spermotoxicity of some pesticides such as profenofos, chlorpyrifos, and lambda-cyhalothrin on male albino mice.

Study design: To assess the effect of tested pesticides on sperm morphology of male albino mice treated for 30, 60 and 90 consecutive days with different doses of pesticides (1/10, 1/40 and ADI LD₅₀).

Place and Duration of Study: Institute of animal health, Ministry of Agriculture, Egypt, between May 2011 and March 2012.

Results: Data suggest a potential association between exposures to tested pesticides and decreased sperm quality and increased teratospermic (abnormal sperm morphology). Further support for testicular toxicity comes from studies in laboratory albino mice that showed associations between exposure tested pesticides and sperm shape abnormalities, as well as dose-response relationships between exposure and a decline in epididymal sperm count and motility and increased abnormal sperm.

Conclusion: Tested pesticides can cause male reproductive system abnormalities that include reduced sperm production. It is also possible that the genetic information of the sperm may potentially be altered prior to fertilization.

Keywords: male albino mice, lambda-cyhalothrin, profenofos, chlorpyrifos, sperm fertility, sperm motility, sperm shape abnormalities, primary spermatocytes.

22 1. INTRODUCTION

23 The health effects of pesticide exposures on male reproduction are a topic of considerable
24 concern in environmental, occupational and reproductive epidemiology. In recent years,
25 scientists have become more aware that human-made chemicals may disrupt reproductive
26 function in wildlife and humans. Pesticides as human-made chemicals designed to kill living
27 target organisms, are biologically active. An early insight into how pesticides can act as
28 reproductive toxicants at the population level came from case reports in the 1970s of sterility
29 among men working with the pesticides (Teitelbaum, 1999). Human and animal data
30 suggest a potential association between exposures to some commonly used insecticides
31 and decreased sperm quality. Further support for testicular toxicity comes from studies in
32 laboratory mice that showed associations between exposures tested pesticides and sperm
33 shape abnormalities, as well as dose-response relationships between exposure and a
34 decline in epididymal sperm count and motility and increased abnormal sperm morphology.
35 Recently, the CDC reported that chlorpyrifos increase sperm shape abnormalities of males
36 in the United States, (CDC 2003). Although both animal toxicology and human epidemiologic
37 studies have shown that pesticides may operate through hormonal or genotoxic pathways to
38 affect spermatogenesis. Profenofos considered as one of the male reproductive toxicants
39 (Moustafa *et al.*, 2007). The objective of this investigation is to evaluate the effect of tested
40 pesticides on sperm motility, morphology and primary spermatocytes in male albino mice, in
41 order to recognize the effects of these insecticides to the environment and to determine the
42 draw bakes of such chemicals on humans.

43 2.0. Materials and methods:

44 **2.1. Animals:** 80 male albino mice (aged 4-5 weeks, mean weight 20 gram) were used in
45 this investigation. The animals were randomly housed in appropriate stainless cages in
46 groups of 8 animals/cage. The animals were monitored daily for any abnormal symptoms
47 prior to experimentation and weight changes were recorded weekly.

48 **2.2. Chemicals:** Lambda-cyhalothrin is a restricted synthetic pyrethroid insecticide.
49 profenofos, and chlorpyrifos are organophosphorus insecticides were kindly provided from
50 Central Agricultural Pesticide Laboratory (Dokki, Giza, Egypt) and all compounds were of 99
51 % purity.

52 **2.3. Animal treatment schedule:** Randomized groups of albino mice housed in cages
53 containing saw dust as bedding and were allocated into 10 groups, each one contained 8
54 males, the first one group as a control, while the second, third, and fourth group were treated
55 with lambda-cyhalothrin at doses 1/10 LD₅₀, 1/40 LD₅₀ and daily acceptable in take (ADI) for
56 30, 60, and 90 days respectively through oral administration by gavage. But the other groups
57 were treated with profenofos and chlorpyrifos as a previously mentioned doses and period.
58 Pesticides were given twice per weekly, as mentioned in Table (1).

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63 **Table (1): The treatment schedule and design**

Treatment	Group No.	Doses mg/kg./b.wt.	Period	Dose/week
—	Group (1)		As a control	
Lambda-cyhalothrin	Group (2)	1/10 LD ₅₀ = 9.5	30, 60, and 90 days	twice dose
	Group (3)	1/40 LD ₅₀ = 2.37		
	Group (4)	(ADI) = 0.005		
	Group (5)	1/10 LD ₅₀ = 35		
Profenofos	Group (6)	1/40 LD ₅₀ = 8.95	30, 60, and 90 days	twice dose
	Group (7)	(ADI) = 0.01		
	Group (8)	1/10 LD ₅₀ = 15		
Chlorpyrifos	Group (9)	1/40 LD ₅₀ = 3.75	30, 60, and 90 days	twice dose
	Group (10)	(ADI) = 0.01		

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65 **2.4. Sampling:** The testes were removed by making an incision into the scrotum and fat
66 tissue was cleaned as previously described in Alder (1984). Then the tunica was removed
67 and transferred into small petri dishes containing sodium citrate. The tunica was cut up with
68 forceps several times, and then they were mashed on the fly mesh with flat-top forceps. The
69 fluid containing the cells were transferred to 12 x 100 mm round bottom centrifuge tubes,
70 centrifuged at 1000 r.p.m. for 5 min. Supernatant was completely discarded. The hypotonic
71 solution (1% tris-sodium citrate) was slowly added and centrifuged, after 15-20 min., and
72 then the cells were fixed in (methanol and glacial acetic acid, 3:1). The fixation was changed
73 twice after 10 min., for each by centrifugation between changes.

74 **2.5. Slide preparation and staining:** Separated cells were transferred gently on slides
75 then air dried. The slides were stained at least 10 min., using 10 % Giemsa (pH 6.8),
76 washed and allowed to dry for subsequent light microscope analysis.

77 **2.6. Sperm analysis:** Sperm motility and sperm morphological analysis was done
78 according to the method described by (Jeong *et al.*, 2005).

79 **3.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**80 **3.1. Analysis of sperm, measures and abnormalities:**

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82 Various morphology sperm abnormalities Figures (1-22) were observed in control and
83 treated animals. The most common types of abnormalities were amorphous, hookless and
84 big head. Percentage of abnormal spermatozoa presented are shown in Table (2) and
85 illustrated in Figures (3-22). Profenofos as well as Chlorpyrifos caused an increase in
86 abnormal sperm heads and tails not only at all doses level used, but also at different time
87 interval. Their frequencies in comparison with the control animals are shown in Table (1).
88 Lambda-cyhalothrin caused fewer changes. These present evidence suggests that the
89 percentage of abnormal sperms were affected by treatment doses and period.
90 Sperm motility decreased in treated mice with each pesticide at the highest concentration
91 and the least incidence was noticed with lambda-cyhalothrin. Total sperm abnormalities

92 were increased for all tested pesticides at both concentrations. Generally, the most
93 pronounced malformations which were observed in sperms are bent tail, coiled tail with
94 protoplasmic droplets. Sperm morphology is considered as a better discriminator between
95 fertile and infertile males than sperm concentration (Guzick *et al.*, 2001). Sperm morphology
96 and motility could also be useful markers of toxic damage even in the absence of any effect
97 on fertility.

98 The obtained results are in accordance with those found by (Abd El-Aziz *et al.* 1994), who
99 revealed that diazinon given orally to male rats for 65 consecutive days decreased sperm
100 motility associated with an increase in the percentage of dead and morphologically abnormal
101 spermatozoa. Methyl Parathion has been shown to induce reproductive abnormalities in both
102 wild life and humans with reduction in sperm counts (Mathew *et al.*, 1992). Furthermore,
103 (Sarkar 2000) found that Sub-lethal chronic administration (7-14 mg kg⁻¹ a day for 15 days)
104 of quinalphos resulted in severe disruption of spermatogenesis with increasing doses of
105 pesticide. Remarkable reduction in the sperm count was observed in Westar rats following
106 treatment with quinalphos (250 µg kg⁻¹, i.p.) for approximately one (13 days) and two cycles
107 (26 days) of the seminiferous epithelium (Ray *et al.*, 1992). Prior epidemiologic work on
108 Chinese pesticide factory workers showed that organophosphorus pesticides exposure was
109 associated with decreased sperm concentration and motility (Padungtod *et al.*, 2000). Sperm
110 production and percentage of motile sperm were decreased in the 15 and 28 mg/kg/day
111 treated male mice groups with dimethoate compared to the control (Farag *et al.*, 2007). (El-
112 Hoda A. Zidan 2009) showed that both the concentrations of the chlorpyrifos methyl,
113 diazinon and profenofos decreased sperm count associated with increase in the number
114 of morphologically abnormal spermatozoa of treated rats; however sperm motility was
115 significantly decreased with the highest concentration of the tested pesticides. (Suresh C.
116 Joshi and Preeti Sharma 2011) mentioned that organophosphorous compounds
117 (organophosphates, OP) are known to produce reproductive toxicity, decrease in the fertility
118 levels of humans and animals.

119 These findings agree with (Silva Gomes, 1991) which reported that cyhalothrin exposed to
120 mice had a significantly smaller number of head dips in the whole board test. (Ratnasooriya
121 *et al.*, 2002) mentioned that male mice exposed to lambda-cyhalothrin in different doses had
122 no effect on fertility. (Piña-Guzmán B. *et al.*, 2005) showed organophosphorus pesticides,
123 are associated with male reproductive effects, including sperm chromatin alterations. (Ai
124 Okamura *et al.*, 2005) said that sperm counts and sperm morphology in the mice was
125 decreased when exposed to Dichlorvos, also (Narayana K. *et al.*, 2006) found abnormalities
126 in sperm density using Methyl parathion organophosphate changes such as epithelial cell
127 morphology and luminal observations, the sperm density was normal in control, and
128 moderately decreased in experiment 1 at 3.5 and 7 mg/kg. (Aydogan M., and Barlas N.,
129 2006) reported that mice treated with organophosphate it has been observed that abnormal
130 sperm percentages in treatment groups increased considerably.

131 Results showed that there was a correlation between Chlorpyrifos and Profenofos administration and
132 the highly significant decrease of reproductive performance in male mice that agrees with (Ahmed *et al.*,
133 2012). The reduction in fertility index may simply represent the effects of chlorpyrifos exposure
134 on sperm parameters. Therefore, the effects of chlorpyrifos on the fertility can be attributed to its
135 ability to reduce sperm morphology and motility. Finally we can conclude that both the
136 concentrations of the tested pesticides decreased sperm motility associated with increase in
137 the number of morphologically abnormal of treated mice; however sperm motility was
138 significantly decreased with the highest concentration of the tested pesticides.

139 Data suggest a potential association between exposures to tested used pesticides and
140 decreased sperm quality. The present study revealed that increased teratospermic
141 (abnormal sperm morphology). Further support for testicular toxicity comes from studies in
142 laboratory mice that showed associations between exposure tested pesticides and sperm
143 shape abnormalities, as well as dose-response relationships between exposure and a
144 decline in epididymal sperm count and motility and increased abnormal sperm.

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Table (2): Effect on sperm morphology induced by lambda-cyhalothrin, profenofos, and chlorpyrifos at (1/10, 1/40, LD₅₀ and ADI) for 30, 60, and 90 days as respectively.

Pesticides	Doses	Period	Total abnormal sperm	Types of sperm abnormalities					
				Amorphous	Without book	Big head	Small head	Tail with 2 head	Others
Con.		30	6.2	1.4	1.5	1.1	0.8	0.5	0.9
		60	6.0	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.0	0.7	1.2
		90	7.2	1.8	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.5
Lamba.	1/10	30	13.5	3.2	2.7	1.9	1.7	1.5	2.5
		60	15.3	3.5	3.0	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.8
		90	16.5	3.8	3.2	2.4	2.0	2.1	3.0
	1/40	30	15.0	2.9	3.0	2.6	2.0	1.7	2.8
		60	17.1	4.1	3.1	2.7	2.4	1.9	2.9
		90	18.4	4.2	3.5	2.9	2.5	2.2	3.1
	ADI	30	10.5	1.7	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.3
		60	8.3	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.5
		90	8.8	1.8	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.6	1.5
Profenofos	1/10	30	18.2	5.1	3.4	2.5	1.9	2.3	3.0
		60	20.9	5.8	3.7	2.8	2.5	2.7	3.4
		90	25.6	7.1	4.4	3.5	2.7	3.2	4.7
	1/40	30	18.9	4.6	3.5	3.1	2.2	2.1	3.4
		60	21.9	5.1	4.2	3.7	2.5	2.8	3.6
		90	23.9	5.5	4.6	4.1	3.1	3.1	3.5
	ADI	30	10.8	2.5	1.9	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.8
		60	11.6	2.7	2.2	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.9
		90	12.3	2.8	2.0	1.7	2.0	1.9	1.9
Chlorpyrifos	1/10	30	18	4.8	3.3	2.4	1.9	2.4	3.2
		60	18.3	5.5	3.9	2.9	2.5	2.8	3.7
		90	25.4	6.1	4.6	3.8	3.3	3.5	4.1
	1/40	30	19.9	5.4	3.6	2.3	2.7	2.1	3.8
		60	23.4	5.9	4.7	3.0	2.9	2.8	4.1
		90	26.9	6.5	5.4	3.2	3.7	3.4	4.7
	ADI	30	10.8	1.9	2.0	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.8
		60	11.5	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.7	2.1	2.0
		90	12.2	2.2	2.2	1.9	1.7	2.2	2.0

149 100 cells were counted

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151 Finally, we can say that this is a preliminary work that shows some abnormalities in sperm
 152 structure, motility and nuclei morphology, and we suggest some important future studies,
 153 whole male reproductive organs sampled fertility tests must be done, to give a full picture of
 154 the caused male reproductive system abnormalities can be done using tested pesticides. It
 155 is also possible that the genetic information of the sperm may potentially be altered prior to
 156 fertilization. However, the evidence that such environmental chemicals cause infertility is still
 157 largely circumstantial. There are many missing links in the causal chain that would connect
 158 receptor binding to changes in reproductive health with decreased fertility.

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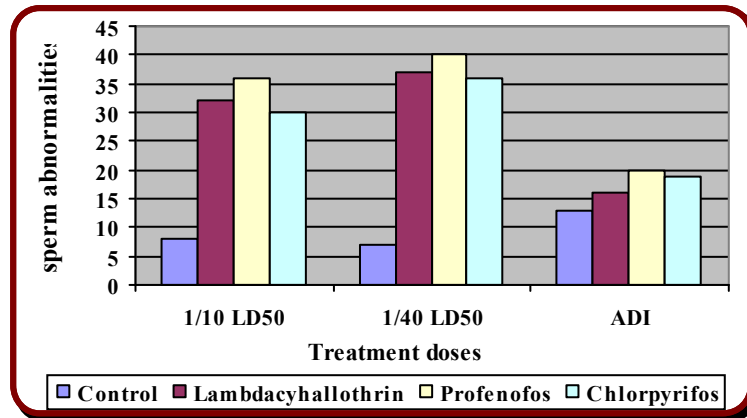
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169 **Fig. (1): Changes in sperm shape after treatment with tested pesticides**

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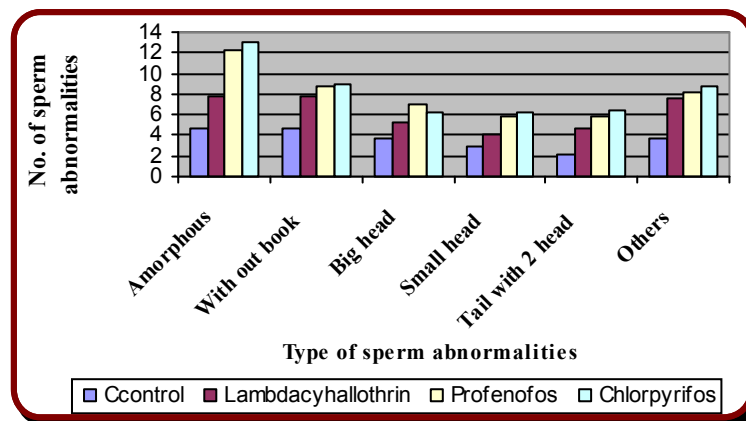
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182 **Fig. (2): Type of changes in sperm shape after treatment with tested pesticides**

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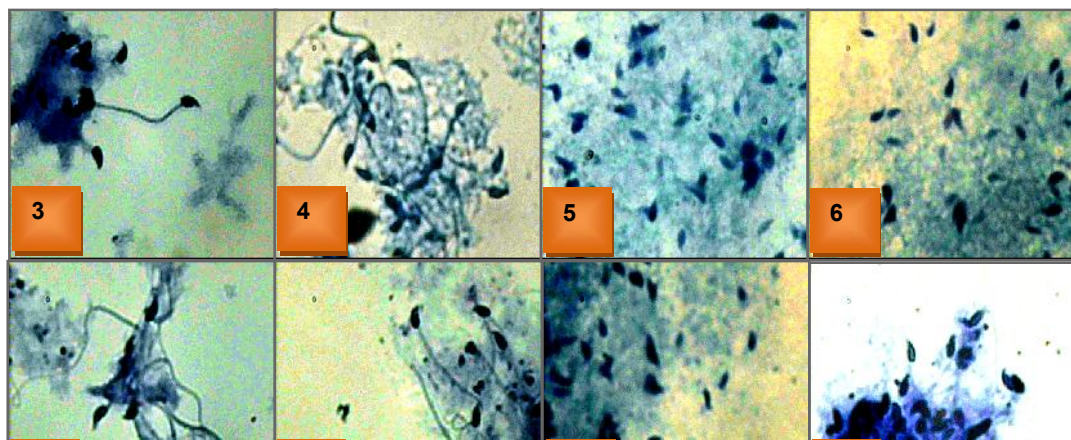
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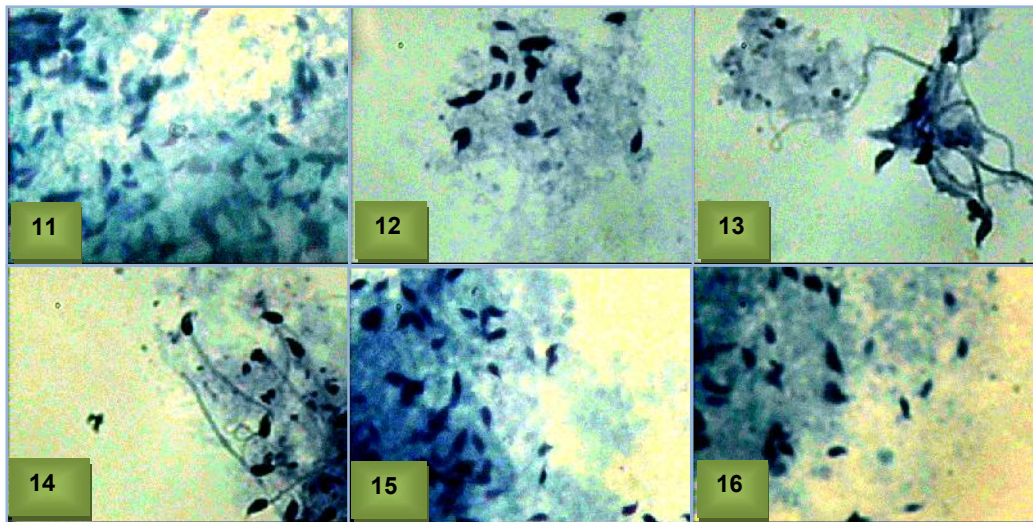
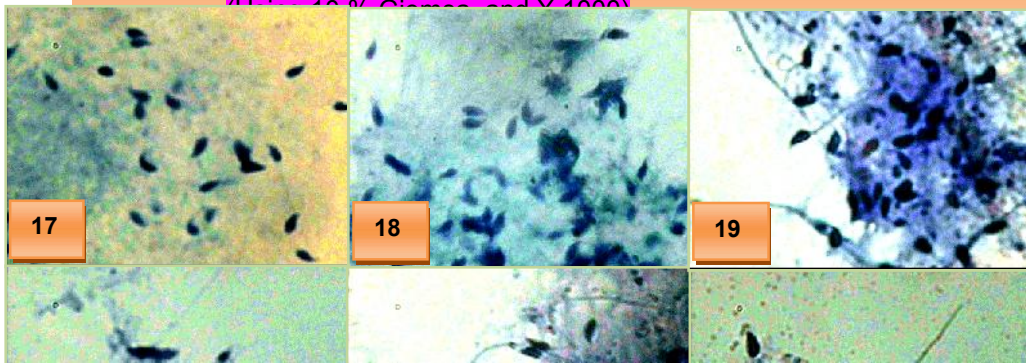


Fig. (11,12): Photomicrograph of mice sperm morphology induced by pofenofos at (1/10 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
Fig. (13,14): Photomicrograph of mice sperm morphology induced by pofenofos at (1/40 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
ig. (15,16): Photomicrograph of mice sperm morphology induced by profenofos at (ADI) for 90 days.



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266 **3.2. Analysis of mice primary spermatocytes:**

267 The results obtained from the analysis of Diakinesis stage in mice primary spermatocytes
268 after treatment with the lambda-cyhalothrin, profenofos and chlorpyrifos is illustrated in Table
269 (3). Three different types of aberration were observed they are stickiness, exchanges, and
270 univalent of se as well as of autosomal chromosomes were observed in Figures (3-22). After
271 treatment with tested pesticides stickiness ranged from 4, 4, and 5 in the negative control to
272 9, 13, and 14 after treatment with the highest tested dose 1/10 LD₅₀ for 90 days with the
273 Lambda-cyhalothrin, profenofos and chlorpyrifos as respectively. Univalent involved X, Y
274 and autosomal chromosomes were obtained. The total percent of aberrant cells ranged from
275 8 to 13 % for the control group. Meanwhile, chlorpyrifos highly significantly decreased by 39,
276 67, and 19 after treatment with 1/10 LD₅₀, and 1/40 LD₅₀ and (ADI) for 90 days respectively.
277 In similar, profenofos caused significant decrease after treatment with 1/10 LD₅₀, 1/40 LD₅₀
278 and (ADI) as recorded 66, 63, and 17 for 90 days respectively. Also, lambda-cyhalothrin
279 caused decrease after treatment with 1/10 LD₅₀, 1/40 LD₅₀ and (ADI) as 40, 66, and 23 for
280 90 days respectively.

281 It was found that the tested pesticides were capable to cause univalent X, Y as well as
282 autosomal chromosomes. Illustrates stickiness and univalents obtained after treatment with
283 all tested pesticides. Cytological examination proved that in the control group binucleat and
284 multinuclei were not observed. At a low dose level 1/40 the binucleat cells were shown to be
285 20, 19 and 18 and multinuclei were 19, 18, and 18, while the higher dose 1/10 binucleat cells
286 were estimated to be 18, 22 and 20 and multinuclei were 16, 17, and 16 as well treated with
287 lambda-cyhalothrin, profenofos, and chlorpyrifos for 90 days respectively.

288 The data revealed that significant decreased of fertility after administration of all tested
289 pesticides either in high (1/10 LD₅₀) or low dose (1/40 LD₅₀) within the three post treatment

290 period (30, 60 and 90 days) respectively. In the similar effect between high dose (1/10 LD₅₀)
291 and low dose (1/40 LD₅₀), while with (ADI) dose the result showed no significant changes
292 with all tested pesticides and all treatment period. Profenofos was proven to induce different
293 types of aberration in mice germinal cells more than lambda-cyhalothrin, and chlorpyrifos.

294 chlorpyrifos administration of (1, 10 and 100 mg/kg b.w./day) to mature mice (F0) through
295 pre-mating, mating, gestation and lactation period and to their offspring (F1) until 13 weeks
296 age via gavages, its caused decreased in fertility index and numbers of implantation and
297 born pups and a higher male sex ratio of pups.

298 This finding disagree with (Amina *et al.*, 2007) which reported that dimethoate was given
299 orally by gavage to male mice for 20 days before mating with untreated females the percent
300 morphologically normal spermatozoa were unaffected in any of dose groups however, sperm
301 production and percent motile sperm were decreased in the 15 and 28 mg/kg/day treated
302 groups compared to the control. On the other hand (Piña-Guzmán *et al.*, 2009) reported
303 male mice were exposed to Methyl parathion (20 mg/kg bw, i.p.) and spermatozoa from
304 epididymis-vas deferens were collected at 7 or 28 days post-treatment to assess the effects
305 on maturing spermatozoa and spermatocytes, respectively, in spermatozoa collected at 7
306 and 28 (dpt), and decreases in sperm quality and induced acrosome reactions were
307 observed; reduced mitochondrial membrane potential and lipoperoxidation were observed at
308 7 (dpt) only.

309 However (Dutta *et al.*, 2006) studied the effect of endosulfan on bluegill testes after 24 h of
310 exposure there was evidence of slight signs of connective tissue splintering, after 48-h
311 exposure resulted in breakage of primary spermatocyte walls and separation from the
312 seminiferous tubules but after 72-h testis showed further connective tissue damage and
313 migration of primary spermatogonia into the lumen, after 96 h, there was significant damage
314 to connective tissue and the seminiferous tubules were less pronounced, after 1 and 2
315 weeks, the seminiferous tubule walls were disrupted and missing in places and the structure
316 of the testis was much disorganized compared to the control testis, biometric analysis
317 indicated that the diameter of the primary spermatogonia decreased from 24 h to two weeks,
318 these kinds of damage could affect the spermatids and spermatozoa and possibly have a
319 negative impact on spermatogenesis and male fertility. Finally our results showed that
320 decrease in concentrations of spermatozoas the same described with (Muftau *et al.*, 2013).
321 The same with (Michal *et al.*, 2010) which reported that diazinon causes the damage of the
322 germinal epithelium in the testes leading to the spermatogenesis failure, damaged and
323 separating spermatids lines, reduced spermatogenesis. Also (Maria *et al.*, 2012) mentioned
324 that cadmium and diazinon exerted deleterious effect inducing spermatozoa motility
325 alterations which could be subsequently negatively related to male fertility.

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331 Table (3): Effect on mice primary spermatocytes induced by lambda-cyhalothrin,
 332 profenofos, and chlorpyrifos at (1/10, 1/40, from LD₅₀ and ADI) for 30, 60, and 90 as
 333 respectively.

Pesticides	Doses	Period	Stickiness	Univalent					
				XY	Autosomes	Binucleate	Multinuclear	Total percent of aberrant cells	
Cont.		30	4.0	2	2	0	0	8	
		60	4.0	2	1	0	0	7	
		90	5.0	3	2	1	2	13	
Lamba-	1/10	30	5.0	4	2	11	10	32	
		60	8.0	5	5	15	13	35	
		90	9.0	5	7	18	16	40	
	1/40	30	6.0	4	3	13	11	51	
		60	8.0	6	6	15	16	40	
		90	12.0	7	8	20	19	66	
	Profenofos	ADI	30	4.0	3	2	4	3	16
			60	4.0	3	2	5	3	17
			90	5.0	4	3	6	5	23
1/10		30	5.0	3	3	14	11	36	
		60	8.0	5	6	18	15	52	
		90	13.0	6	8	22	17	66	
1/40		30	5.0	4	3	15	13	40	
		60	7.0	6	5	17	14	49	
		90	10.0	7	9	19	18	63	
	30	3.0	2	2	5	4	16		
	60	5.0	2	2	5	5	16		
	90	4.0	3	2	6	5	17		
Chlorpyrifos	1/10	30	7.0	4	4	15	10	55	
		60	11.0	6	6	17	15	39	
		90	14.0	7	7	20	16	39	
	1/40	30	7.0	4	3	13	12	36	
		60	13.0	5	5	16	16	55	
		90	17.0	7	7	18	18	67	
		30	4.0	2	2	5	3	16	
		60	3.0	1	2	4	3	13	
		90	5.0	2	3	5	4	19	

334 100 cells were counted

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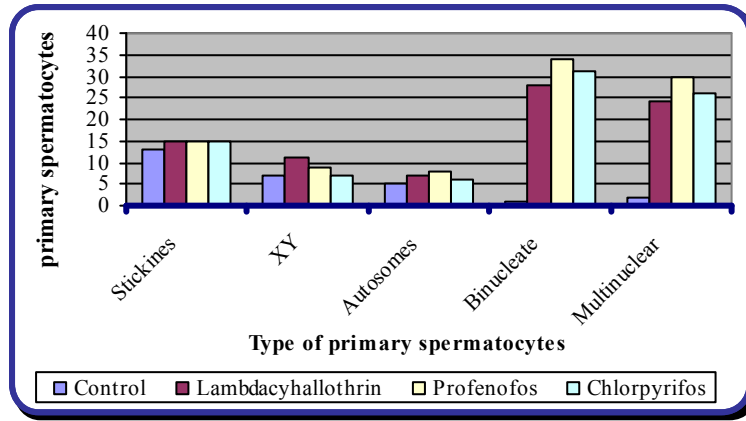
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Fig. (1): Type of changes in mice primary spermatocytes aberrations after treatment with tested pesticides.

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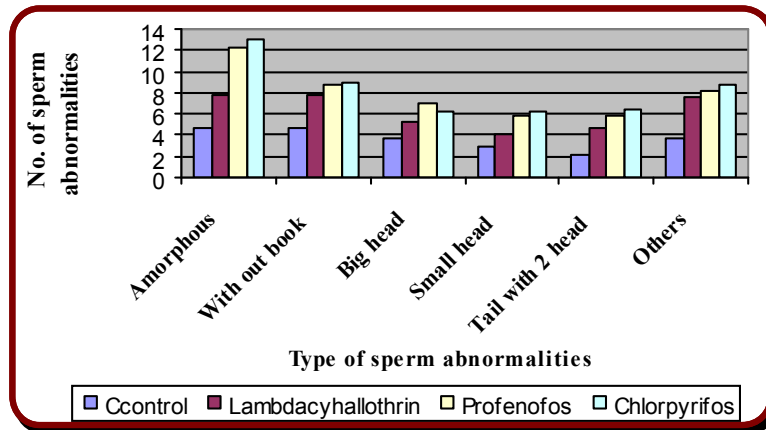
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Fig. (2): Type of changes in sperm aberrations after treatment with tested pesticides.

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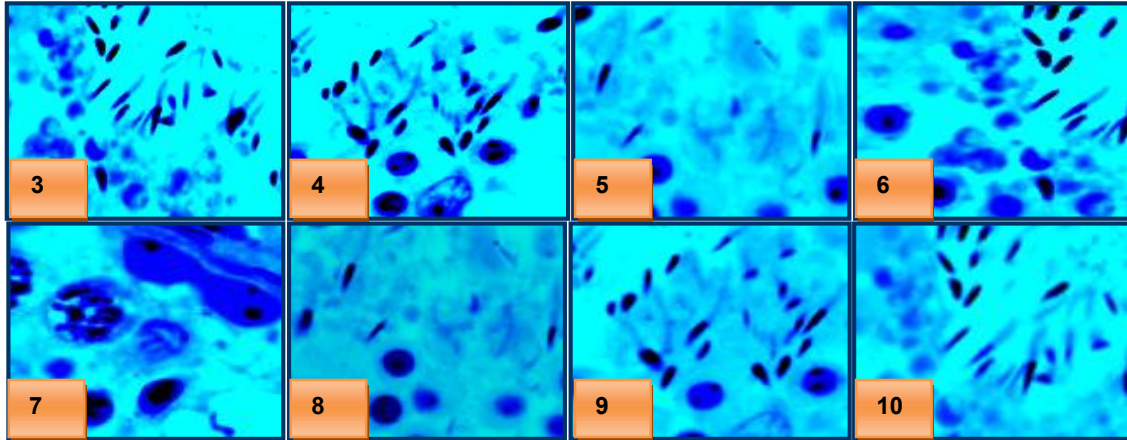


Fig. (3,4): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations as a negative control.
Fig. (5,6): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by lambda-cyhalothrin at (1/10 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
Fig. (7,8): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by lambda-cyhalothrin at (1/40 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
Fig. (9,10): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by profenofos at (ADI).
(Using 10 % Giemsa, and X 1000)

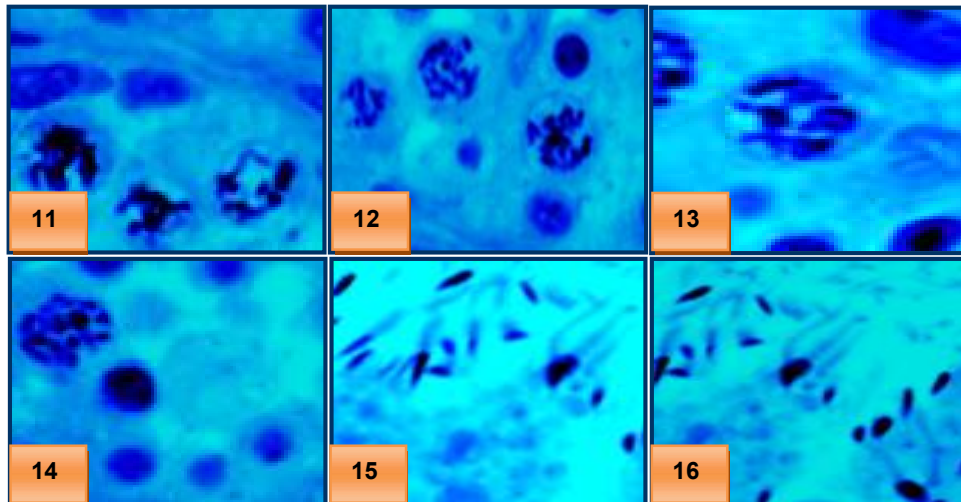


Fig. (11,12): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by pofenofos at (1/10 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
Fig. (13,14): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by pofenofos at (1/40 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
Fig. (15,16): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by profenofos at (ADI) for 90 days.
(Using 10 % Giemsa, and X 1000)

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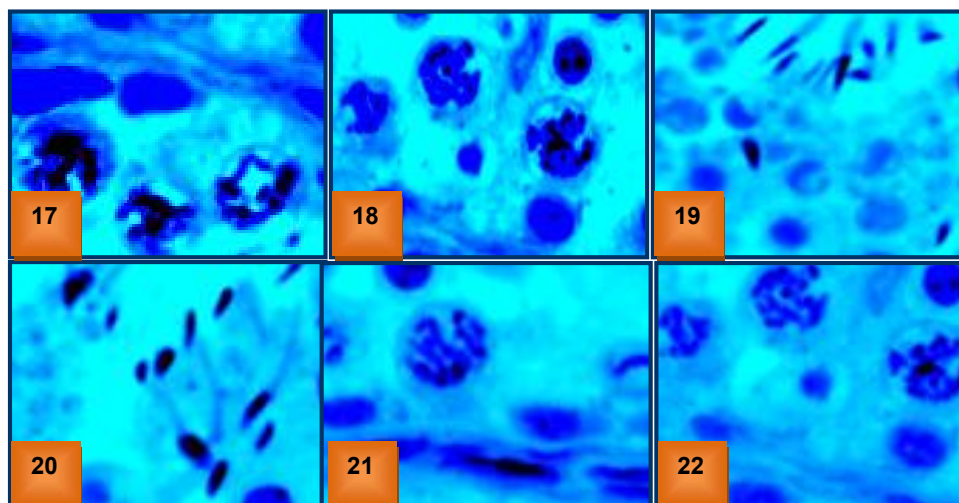


Fig. (17,18): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by chlorpyrifos at (1/10 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
Fig. (19,20): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by chlorpyrifos at (1/40 LD₅₀) for 90 days.
Fig. (21,22): Photomicrograph of mice primary spermatocytes aberrations induced by chlorpyrifos at (ADI LD₅₀) for 90 days.
(Using 10 % Giemsa, and X 1000)

4. CONCLUSION:

The results obtained have shown that sperm abnormalities increased in treated mice with all tested pesticides at both concentrations. Therefore, we suggest that these pesticides should be used at recommended doses only if necessary.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors may use the following wordings for this section: "H. M. El-bendary 1, designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. 'S. E. Negm 2, A. A. Saleh 3, M. E. Khadey 4 and F. A. Hosam Eldeen 5 managed the analyses of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

All authors hereby declare that "Principles of laboratory animal care" (NIH publication No. 85-23, revised 1985) were followed, as well as specific national laws where applicable. All experiments have been examined and approved by the appropriate ethics committee.

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