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Full Papers

Titers of ecdysone, 20-hydroxyecdysone and juvenile hormone III throughout the life cycle of a hemimetabolous insect, the ovoviviparous cockroach *Nauphoeta cinerea*

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Summary. Titers of ecdysone, 20-hydroxyecdysone and juvenile hormone III were measured in whole body extracts or hemolymph of embryos, first, penultimate and last stadium nymphs, and adult females of *Nauphoeta cinerea*. We used a gas-chromatography/mass spectrometry method for quantifying juvenile hormone and a radio-immunoassay for ecdysteroid determination. Juvenile hormone III is particularly abundant in the embryonic stage (up to 960 ng/g), at a low level in first and penultimate stadium nymphs (2–10 ng/ml) and almost absent in the last nymphal stadium; in the adult female the juvenile hormone titer rises to 180 ng/ml in hemolymph during rapid oocyte growth. The titers of ecdysone and 20-hydroxyecdysone undergo similar fluctuations in the embryonic and nymphal stages, being highest at the time of cuticle formation in the embryo and a few days before the nymphal and adult molts (around 100–200 ng/ml for ecdysone and 2–4 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ for 20-hydroxyecdysone).

Key words. Ecdysteroids; juvenile hormone III; developmental changes; cockroach; *Nauphoeta cinerea*.

Introduction

According to the classical model for the regulation of insect development and metamorphosis (fig. 1) molting is induced by ecdysteroids but the nature of the molt depends on the concentration of juvenile hormone (JH) in the hemolymph³⁰. In holometabolous insects JH is assumed to be high before larval molts, low at the larval-pupal transformation and absent before metamorphosis. The classical model derives mainly from ligation, transplant and parabiosis experiments³⁰, whereas titer measurements of either JH or ecdysteroids have been made only in a few cases at selected stages^{5,6,13,17,18,28}. The embryo is not included in the classical model (fig. 1) because ecdysteroids^{11,19,20,22} and JH³ have only recently been identified and measured during embryonic development and in only a few species. There is still uncertainty surrounding the function of these hormones in embryos²⁶. Nevertheless, ecdysteroids seem to play a role in cuticle formation in the embryo similar to their function during nymphal development^{10,22,26}. The same hormones are found also in the adult female of most insects where JH acts as a gonadotropic hormone by stimulating both

oocyte growth and yolk protein synthesis in the fat body¹⁰. At this stage ecdysteroids are located mainly in the ovary¹⁴ but in some insects they also circulate in the hemolymph^{12,15,20,32}.

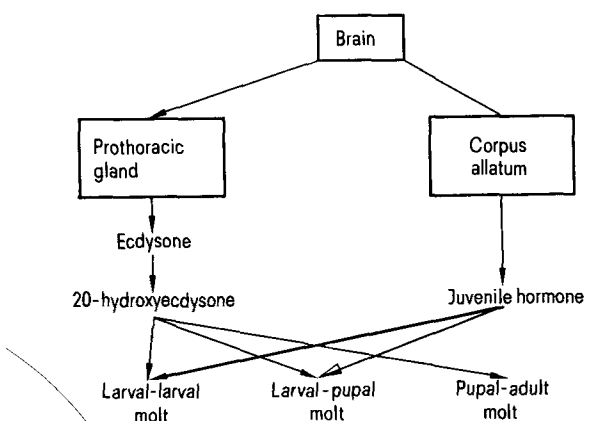


Figure 1. The classical model of the regulation of insect development and metamorphosis. The half-shaded arrow signifies a lower titer.

In view of the paucity of information available concerning variations in the titer of JH and ecdysteroids during development we considered it desirable to examine the validity of the classical model (fig. 1) by simultaneously measuring the quantity of ecdysone, 20-hydroxyecdysone and JH during early, late and premetamorphic nymphal stages; for purposes of comparison we also included the embryonic and adult stages. Our experimental insect, *Nauphoeta cinerea* appeared suitable for this type of investigation because much is known about the biology and endocrinology of this species. The ecdysteroids in embryos^{19,20}, ovary³² and hemolymph of adult females²⁵ have already been identified and quantified and the JH has been quantified in embryos^{19,20} and adult females²⁴ using a bioassay. Furthermore we have identified JH III as the only JH in all stages during a study undertaken to reassess the identity of JH(s) in nymphal and adult *Nauphoeta cinerea*².

Material and methods

Nauphoeta cinerea were reared at 26 °C and 60% relative humidity on dog flakes and water in a 12-h light/12-h dark photoperiod. Under these conditions embryonic development lasts 35–40 days, the first nymphal stadium 9–10 days, the penultimate nymphal stadium 19–20 days, the last nymphal stadium 24–27 days, and oocyte maturation 12–13 days.

Work-up of samples for JH titer determination

Generally around 1 ml of hemolymph or 1–10 g of whole body samples were processed according to the method described by Bergot et al.⁴, with minor modifications outlined by Baker et al.². In this method the initial extraction steps are followed by fast and efficient purification procedures chosen to separate JH from several major lipid classes: glycerides, sterols and their esters, and free fatty acids. The 10,11-epoxide moiety of JH is converted to an 11-methoxy- Δ^3 -10-hydroxy derivative (methoxyhydrin), which is purified, completing the sample work-

up. The derivatives are then analyzed by GC/MS with selected ion monitoring for detection. A tritium-labeled analog of JH is added during the extraction as an internal standard, which allows the recovery to be determined for each sample.

Work-up of samples for ecdysteroid determination

For each analysis approximately 20 μ l of hemolymph was collected from first stadium nymphs (20–30 insects) and approximately 100 μ l from penultimate and last stadium nymphs (6–10 insects); the hemolymph was then extracted and purified by TLC as described by Zhu et al.³². For ecdysteroid determinations a radioimmunoassay (RIA) was used^{7,16}. The results are expressed as ng ecdysone or 20-hydroxyecdysone equivalents. Ecdysone and 20-hydroxyecdysone used as standards in each assay were purchased from Simes (Milan), antibodies were a generous gift from Dr J. D. O'Connor (Los Angeles) and 23,24-³H-ecdysone from Dr J. Koolman (Marburg).

Results

JH titers measured in the various developmental stages are shown in the table. JH III is particularly abundant in embryos at stages between days 25 and 34; in the first and penultimate nymphal stadia comparatively low titers were observed and there seems to be only very little variation throughout any one stadium. The majority of samples from last stadium nymphs were devoid of JH. A high JH III titer is observed in adult females at the stage of rapid oocyte growth.

In order to investigate the existence of mutual interactions between JH III and ecdysteroids in nymphal development we measured the titers of ecdysone and 20-hydroxyecdysone in the first, penultimate and last nymphal stadia (fig. 2). The data obtained show that the concentration of these two compounds was closely synchronized in all three stadia investigated, 20-hydroxyecdysone always being predominant and showing a peak a few days before the molts. However, early in each stadium a slight

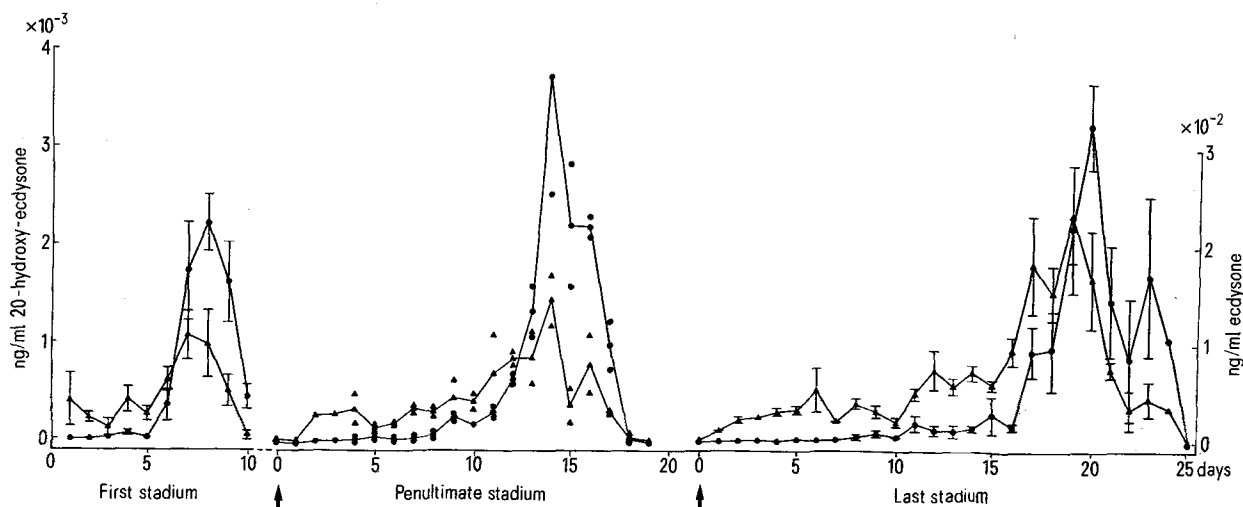


Figure 2. Titers of ecdysone (\blacktriangle) and 20-hydroxyecdysone (\bullet) in first, penultimate, and last stadium nymphs. Data are given in ecdysone and 20-hydroxyecdysone equivalents and are means \pm SEM for first and last stadium nymphs (based on 3–6 determinations per point) and single values for penultimate stadium nymphs. Note the difference in scale for ecdysone and 20-hydroxyecdysone.

but significant increase in the titer of ecdysone is observed, which is not paralleled by an increase in 20-hydroxyecdysone.

Discussion

Only JH III was found in another study of *Nauphoeta cinerea*² and in this one (table), in contrast to a prior investigation in which JH I and II were also reported²³. The occurrence of only JH III is in agreement with studies conducted on other non-lepidopterous species using similar or related physicochemical analytical methods (See Schooley et al.³¹ for review). Thus JH III assumes both morphogenetic and gonadotropic functions in this insect. The levels of JH III in *Nauphoeta cinerea* embryos between days 25 and 34 (table) are some of the highest titers of JH III ever observed. They are even more remarkable in the light of the fact that adults contain a JH level which is an order of magnitude lower than that in embryos, while in the nymphal stages investigated the levels of JH III were modest or undetectable. Furthermore, equally high levels of methyl farnesoate (the precursor of JH III in non-lepidopterous species) have been detected in *Nauphoeta cinerea* embryos²⁶. Methyl farnesoate possesses a high degree of JH activity with respect to both morphogenetic and gonadotropic functions in this insect (Fehr and Lanzrein, unpublished results). At their peak the combined concentration of JH III plus methyl farnesoate in *Nauphoeta cinerea* embryos is about 10⁻⁵ M. Very few JH determinations in embryos have been performed, particularly using physicochemical methods. Levels of JH III in *Oncopeltus fasciatus* eggs are very low or nil (Bergot et al.³ and Baker et al., unpublished results) although a report based on a bioassay procedure suggested huge levels of JH active material in eggs of this species⁹. *Locusta migratoria* eggs contain moderate levels of JH III (Pener et al., in preparation). Eggs of the lepidopteran species *Manduca sexta*, *Heliothis vi-*

rescens and *Hyalophora cecropia* lack JH III but all contain at least a low level of the higher homologs (JH II, I and 0)³. *Manduca sexta* is an interesting case, as the embryos contain high levels of JH 0 and JH I, together with a unique JH isomeric with JH O³. The embryonic stadia of *Manduca sexta* contain the highest JH titer throughout the life cycle, but the difference between embryonic and post-embryonic stages is not as great as in *Nauphoeta cinerea*. JH III levels in nymphs of the latter (table) are comparable to those obtained from other orthopteroidean species, e.g. *Locusta migratoria*^{5,18}, and *Teleogryllus commodus*²⁷. The moderately high levels of JH III in the vitellogenic female (table) are also comparable to data obtained from certain other adult female insects of this superorder (*Locusta migratoria*^{5,29}, *Teleogryllus commodus*²⁷ and *Taeniopoda eques*²⁷) and are in agreement with earlier data obtained using the *Galleria* wax test²⁴. On the other hand, JH III titers in adult females of the cockroach, *Diploptera punctata* (Tobe et al., submitted for publication) are about an order of magnitude higher than in *Nauphoeta cinerea*. In other species encompassing several insect orders³¹ similar or low levels of JH III have been found as compared to *Nauphoeta cinerea*; the significance of the relative magnitudes of JH titer in various species is at present unclear. From the similarity of the ecdysteroid titer profiles in the three nymphal stadia investigated (fig. 2), it seems that the presence of JH does not influence the fluctuations of ecdysone and 20-hydroxyecdysone nor their relative abundance. In *Locusta migratoria* similar titers of ecdysteroids have been observed^{1,13}, although no early peak has been found in penultimate stadium nymphs of this species¹.

The titer changes of JH III and the molting hormone 20-hydroxyecdysone during an entire life cycle of *Nauphoeta cinerea* are compared in figure 3, which also includes data from earlier publications (see legend to figure). The titer of 20-hydroxyecdysone in the embryo

Titers of JH III during development in *N. cinerea*

Embryo				First stadium nymphs				Penultimate stadium nymphs			Last stadium nymphs			Adult female		
Day	ng/g	\bar{x}	(ng/ml)	Day	ng/g	\bar{x}	(ng/ml)	Day	ng/ml	\bar{x}	Day	ng/ml	\bar{x}	Day	ng/ml	\bar{x}
16	0			1	0.83			3-4	3.5		3	2.3		8	170	
	0	0			0.93	0.88	(4.2)		4.4	4.0		0			140	
17	2.2			3	0.58			5-6	1.9			0	0.76		180	163
	3.7				1.2				5.5	3.7	6	0				
	0.14				0.71			7-8	3.2			0	0			
	0				0.75	0.81	(3.8)		4.8		9	0.8				
	0			5	1.4				5.7	4.6		0	0.4			
	0	1.0	*		1.8			9-10	3.3		14	0				
18	0.1				0.73				4.8			0.4	0.2			
	0	0.05	*		0.99	1.2	(5.8)		4.5		19	0				
21	10.0	10	(42)	7	0.85				5.7	4.6		0	0			
25	840				1.1			11-12	2.2							
	750	795	(3400)		0.70				4.7							
32	430				1.5	1.0	(4.8)		8.4	5.1						
	960	695	(3300)	8	0.23			14-15	7.0							
34	340				0.41	0.32	(1.5)		9.3	8.2						
	510	425	(2000)	9	0			16-17	9.5	9.5						
35	1.2	1.2	(5.90)		4.0	2.0	(9.5)									

Values are given in ng/g for embryos and first stadium nymphs, and in ng/ml hemolymph for penultimate stadium nymphs and adult females. For a better comparison the values for the first group have also been converted into ng/ml (values given in parentheses) on the assumption that all JH circulates in the hemolymph and that the latter represents 21 % of the insect's fresh weight, as determined for penultimate stadium nymphs. For JH titers determined in embryo hemolymph using *Galleria* wax test see Imboden et al.¹⁹. * Circulatory system not yet developed.

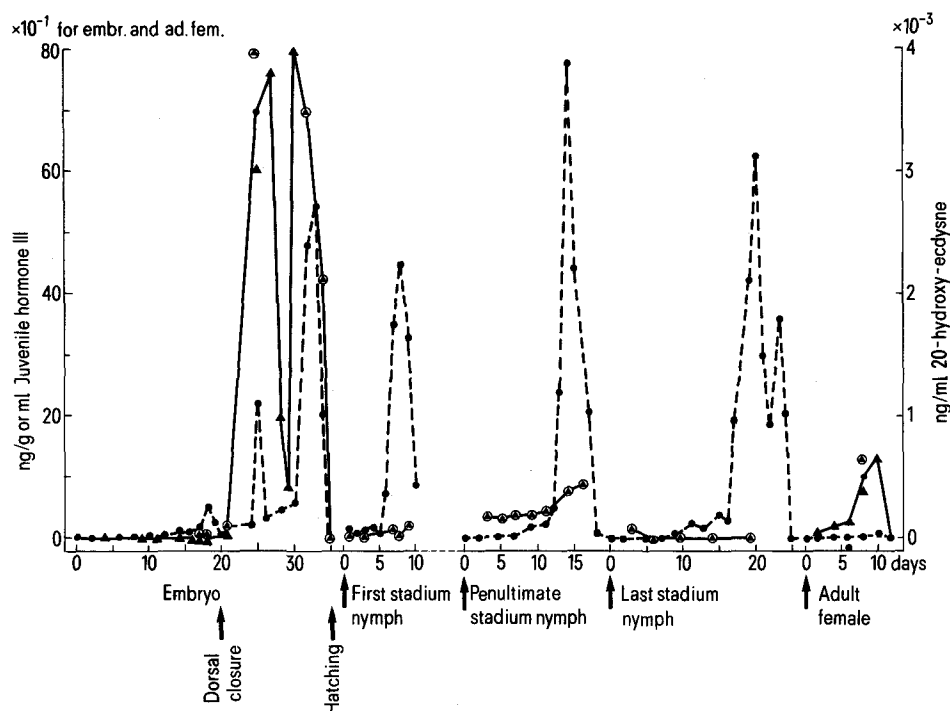


Figure 3. Titers of JH III (\blacktriangle — \blacktriangle) and 20-hydroxyecdysone (\bullet --- \bullet) in embryos, first, penultimate and last stadium nymphs and adult females. (\blacktriangle) are values obtained by the GC/MS method and the others by *Galleria* wax test (bioassay data for embryos redrawn from Imboden et al.¹⁹ and for adult females from Lanzrein et al.²⁴). JH III titers are given in ng/g for embryos and first stadium nymphs and in ng/ml for penultimate and last stadium nymphs and adult females. Data for 20-hydroxyecdysone in embryos are from Imboden et al.¹⁹ and for adult females from Lanzrein et al.²⁵. Note the different scales for JH.

reaches values similar to those observed in the nymphal stages. In the embryo the first small peak observed shortly before dorsal closure coincides with the formation of the first embryonic cuticle and the high peak is seen at the time when the first nymphal (= second embryonic) cuticle is formed. Since JH III is present in large quantities only at the time of formation of the first nymphal cuticle we have suggested that JH III plays a role in controlling this process²⁶. Nevertheless it seems highly probable that JH exerts other functions in the embryo⁸; we do not yet know why the embryo produces so much JH. Comparatively little JH is present during nymphal development, when new nymphal cuticles are also formed. In the adult female the JH III titer rises, whereas only very little 20-hydroxyecdysone is found in comparison with the embryonic and larval stages. The slight but significant increase in 20-hydroxyecdysone titer at the time of chorion formation²⁵ is barely discernible in figure 3 (day 10) but nevertheless possibly has a biological significance^{25,32}.

In conclusion, our data show for the first time the fluctuation in the titers of the major developmental hormones throughout the life cycle of a hemimetabolous insect. They confirm the classical model of the regulation of development and metamorphosis as depicted in figure 1 insofar as JH is more or less absent before metamorphosis and 20-hydroxyecdysone is present before each molt. Regarding absolute quantities, we have observed similar values of ecdysone and 20-hydroxyecdysone in embryos and nymphal stadia, whereas the titers of JH are approximately 100 times higher in the embryos than in

the nymphal stadia. It is difficult to interpret these data and to judge the significance of the absolute quantity of a hormone since its biological effect depends not only on its quantity but also on the responsiveness of the target tissues. Nothing, however, is known of the quality and quantity of JH receptors in embryonic and nymphal target tissues, and even the number of target tissues is by no means clear. The integument is certainly a target tissue for JH in nymphs³⁰ and probably also in the embryo²⁶, but other tissues such as the gut should probably also be considered^{8,21}. As regards the adult female, the data presented here show the presence of high quantities of JH III at a stage of rapid oocyte growth, which is in agreement with its role in inducing yolk protein synthesis and oocyte growth¹⁰. There exists some information regarding the presence of JH-binding proteins (= receptors?) in fat body and ovary in a related cockroach species¹⁰ but the precise biological significance of the relative titer of JH during development will have to be established in future investigations.

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