



Effect of L-carnitine supplementation on seminal plasma quality of Iraqi drakes

KEYWORDS

Carnitine, seminal plasma traits, drakes

Hazim J. Al-Daraji

University of Baghdad, College of Agriculture,
Department of Animal Resource, Baghdad, Iraq

Anmar O. Tahir

University of Baghdad, College of Agriculture,
Department of Animal Resource, Baghdad, Iraq

ABSTRACT This experiment was conducted to determine the effect of different levels of L-carnitine added to drake diets on certain semen plasma characteristics. For that, 48 thirty weeks old Iraqi drakes were divided into 4 equal groups according to the L-carnitine contents added to the diet for 12 weeks (0 mg / kg of diet in control group; T1, 50, 100 and 150 mg / kg diet in the treatment groups T2, T3 and T4, respectively). Semen biochemical characteristics were determined fortnightly. Seminal plasma constituents included in this study were glucose, total protein, cholesterol, aspartate aminotransferase (AST), alanine aminotransferase (ALT), and alkaline phosphatase (ALP). The L-carnitine treatments (T2, T3 and T4) have induced significant ($P < 0.01$) decreases in semen plasma concentrations of glucose, total protein and cholesterol and seminal plasma activity of AST and ALT enzymes during all periods of experiment and also with relation to the overall means of these traits compared to respective control (T1) whereas seminal plasma activity of ALP was significantly ($P < 0.01$) increased during all periods of experiment and also with respect to the overall means of this trait in comparison with control group (T1). These results suggest that dietary L-carnitine supplementation significantly improve semen plasma constituents included in this study. Therefore, L-carnitine can be used as beneficial tool for improve semen quality of bird males.

Introduction

Carnitine occurs in the form of L- and D-isomers; however, only the L-isomer of carnitine is biologically active, while the D-isomer may even be noxious for the organism (Szilagyi, 1998). L-carnitine is a natural, vitamin-like amino-acid, synthesised within the body from lysine and methionine (Vaz and Wanders, 2002), and is very important in the metabolism of lipids. It carries long-chain fatty acids to the mitochondria for beta-oxidation, which produces energy (ATP) needed by the cells for proper functioning (Hoppel, 2003; Ramsay et al., 2001). L-carnitine plays an important role in the processes of cellular detoxification, since it removes acyl-CoA from the mitochondria, excess of which has a toxic effect (Arrigoni Martelli and Caso, 2001). It also protects cellular membranes against oxidative damages resulting from peroxidation of polyunsaturated fatty acids that are a component of membrane phospholipids (Kalaiselvi and Panneerselvam, 1998).

L-carnitine is used as feed additive in poultry diets to increase yield and to improve feed efficiency. Thus, L-carnitine supplementation to diets reduces long chain fatty acid availability for esterification to triacylglycerols and storage in the adipose tissue (Xu et al., 2003). It also participates in biological processes for example, regulation of gluconeogenesis, stimulation of fatty acid synthesis and ketone, branched-chain amino acid, triglyceride and cholesterol metabolism (Corduk et al., 2007). Dietary plants and plant based feedstuffs generally contain very little carnitine compared with animal products (Baumgartner and Blum, 1997). The concentration of carnitine in animals varied widely across species, tissue type and nutritional status of the animal (De-Beer and Coon, 2009). There are contradictory reports in the case of the effects of L-carnitine on animals. Differences in dosage level of L-carnitine, levels of metabolisable energy, fat and cereals in the diet and physiological status of the animals may be responsible for the discrepancies between published studies (Buyse et al., 2001). Spermatozoa are very susceptible to peroxidation damage because of the high concentration of long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids within the phospholipids (Sarica et al., 2007). Many studies have established that spermatozoa and seminal leukocytes have the capability to generate high levels of Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) which can reduce the viability and fertility of spermatozoa (Cerolini et

al., 2005). Carnitine has antioxidant properties which may protect sperm membranes from toxic oxygen metabolites. It also functions to reduce the availability of lipids for peroxidation by transporting fatty acids into the mitochondria for B-oxidation to generate adenosine triphosphate (ATP). This transport of fatty acids into the mitochondria for catabolism reduces the amount of lipid available for peroxidation (Kalaiselvi and Panneerselvam, 1998). Although, cereal grains and their by-products have a low L-carnitine content, they usually represent the major component of poultry diets. Consequently, L-carnitine supplementation in diet or in drinking water would be useful for facilitating fatty acid oxidation and reducing the storage of long-chain fatty acids in spermatozoa membrane (Rezaei et al., 2007). Feeding L-carnitine (500 mg kg⁻¹ of diet) increase sperm concentration and decreased lipid peroxidation of spermatozoa in roosters (Neuman et al., 2002). Adabi et al. (2008) reported that dietary L-carnitine supplementation improved ostrich semen volume, sperm motility, live sperm percent and sperm count. Zhai et al. (2007) indicated that using of L-carnitine (125 mg kg⁻¹ of diet) increase sperm concentration in comparison with control group in roosters. Boars receiving 500 mg or 230 mg of L-carnitine in their daily ration demonstrated increased ejaculate volume and sperm concentration (Währner et al., 2004). Inside a sperm cell, L-carnitine transports fatty acids to the mitochondria, where they undergo beta-oxidation leading to the generation of metabolic energy needed by the sperm cells for their progressive movement (Jacyno et al., 2007).

Scarce literature data and ambiguous results reported by other authors encouraged us to undertake this study in order to establish the effect of L-carnitine added to the daily feed ration on the seminal plasma traits of drakes.

Materials and Methods

The main aim of the present paper was to assess the effect of continuously administered feeding mixture supplemented with L-carnitine on metabolic profile of blood in Iraqi drakes.

A total of 48 Iraqi drakes, 30 weeks old, with an average weight of 1.57 – 2.00 kg were used in this study. They were randomly divided into 4 equal groups (each group contained 12 drakes) according to the dietary L-carnitine (L-Carnitine

Xtreme 60 ct, Dymatize Nutrition Company, USA) supplementation for 12 weeks (0 mg / kg diet; control group (T₁), 50 mg / kg diet (T₂), 100 mg / kg diet (T₃) and 150 mg / kg diet (T₄). Each group was divided into three replicate groups of 4 drakes each. A photoperiod of 24 h was maintained. Food and water were provided *ad libitum* and the diets were presented in mash form. They were formulated to be isocaloric and isonitrogenous and their composition were determined according to the NRC (1994) and the composition of the basal diet is presented in Table 1. The experiment was started with drakes aged 32 weeks. Drakes were restricted from feed 12 h prior to semen collection.

An ejaculate was collected from each of 84 Iraqi drakes according to conventional manual massage method reported by Al-Daraji (2007 a; b). Semen was caught with a glass funnel (70 mm in diameter) attached to a centrifuge tube (10-mL capacity). During the 2-wk training period, all drakes were successfully trained in all experimental groups and started to produce semen. Semen was collected from individual males two times per month for 3 consecutive months (six times for each male). Each ejaculate was pipetted into a 1.5-mL microcentrifuge tube. Tubes were centrifuged at 15,600 x g for 5 in in an Eppendorf Model 5414 microcentrifuge (Brinkmann Instruments, Inc., Westbury, NY). Following centrifugation, seminal plasma supernatants were transferred to 1.5-mL microcentrifuge tubes. Seminal plasma cholesterol was enzymatically measured using cholesterol esterase and cholesterol oxidase according to the enzymatic method described by Allain (1974). Seminal plasma glucose determination was based on the coupling of the enzymatic oxidation of glucose by glucose oxidase resulting in production of hydrogen peroxide. Plasma glucose was determined according to Trinder (1969) using commercial kits of Plasmatic Laboratory Products LTD. Seminal plasma protein was determined by using colorimetric method described by Wotton and Freeman (1982). The peptide bonds of proteins react with Cu²⁺ in alkaline solution to form a colored

Table 1. Percentage of ingredient and calculated chemical analysis of experimental basal diet

Ingredients	(%)
Yellow corn	39
Wheat	33.7
Soya bean meal (44 %)	13
concentration protein *	5
Limestone	6
Vegetable oil	2
Dicalcium Phosphate	1
NaCl	0.3
Total	100
Calculated Chemical composition**	
Crud Protein (%)	15.2
Energy (kcal/kg)	2927,3
Lysine (%)	0.7
Methionine (%)	0.3
Cysteine, %	0.25
Calcium (%)	2.7
Available Phosphorus (%)	0.3

*Concentration protein (BROCON – 5 SPECIAL W) each 1kg of vit .and min. premix (imported from China) contains: 3.25 % Crud protein; 3.5 % Crud fat; 1 % Crud fiber; 6 % Calcium; 3 % Available phosphorus; 2.2 % sodium; 3.5 % methionine; 3.90 % methionine + cysteine; 3.25 % Lysine; 2100 kcal/kg metabolizable energy; 200000 IU Vit A; 40000 IU Vit. D₃; 500mg Vit.E; 30 mg Vit.K₃; 15 mg Vit B₁, B₂; 150 mg Vit B₃; 20 mg Vit B₆; 300 mg Vit.B₁₂; 10 mg Folic acid; 50 mg Biotin; 800 mg Zinc; 100 mg Copper; 15 mg Iodine; 1 mg Iron; 2 mg Selenium; 1.2mg Manganese; 6 mg Cobalt; and antioxidant 90 mg.

**Calculated Chemical composition analysis adopted by NRC (1994).

complex whose absorbance, proportional to the concentration of total protein in the specimen or sample, is measured at 550 nm. The Biuret reagent contains sodium potassium tartrate to complex cupric ions and maintains their solubility in alkaline solution. Colorimetric method was used to determine alkaline phosphatase (ALP) activity according to Kind and King (1954). Seminal plasma aspartate aminotransferase (AST) and alanine transaminase (ALT) activities were determined by using the colorimetric method according to Reitman and Frankel (1957). Commercial kits (Randox Laboratories Ltd., United Kingdom) were used for this purpose. ata were subjected to statistical analysis using a completely randomized design, four levels of L-carnitine 0, 50, 100, 150 ppm were used. The data was analyzed using the SAS program (SAS Institute, 2004). The means of variables were compared using Duncan's multiple- range test (Duncan, 1955).

Results and Discussion

Supplemental dietary carnitine had significant effect on seminal plasma glucose ($P < 0.01$) during all periods of experiments and regarding the overall mean of this trait. The highest and the lowest were obtained, respectively in levels of 250 and 0 mg kg⁻¹ L-carnitine (Table 2). Al-Daraji (2001) concluded that the highly significant negative correlation between numbers of spermatozoa and glucose concentration in seminal plasma suggests the utilization of glucose by spermatozoa. Al- Daraji (2002) indicated that spermatozoa utilize the glucose in their metabolism. Al-Daraji (2007a) reported that there was significant positive correlation between glycolysis rate and motility and sperm density. Agarwal (2004) reported that L-carnitine play a key role in sperm metabolism by providing readily available energy for use by spermatozoa, which positively affects sperm motility, maturation and the spermatogenic process. This beneficial effect is mediated by the transport of long chain fatty acids across the inner membrane of the mitochondria for utilization in metabolism through β - oxidation (Matalliotakis et al., 2000). Epididymal sperm use fatty acid oxidation as the main source of energy metabolism, carnitine is crucial to transport fatty acids into mitochondria matrix within spermatozoa for energy production (Enomoto et al., 2002).

The content of protein in seminal plasma of Iraqi drakes was decreased ($P < 0.01$) by supplementing with 50, 100 or 150 mg L-carnitine/kg diet during all periods of experiment and also as regards the overall means of this

Table 2. Effect of dietary L-carnitine on seminal plasma glucose (mg/dl) (Mean \pm SE) of drakes.

Treatments	Periods			Overall mean
	First month	Second month	Third month	
T1	53.00 \pm 2.08 ^a	50.67 \pm 2.18 ^a	58.00 \pm 1.53 ^a	53.89 \pm 1.93 ^a
T2	46.00 \pm 1.00 ^b	42.67 \pm 1.67 ^b	43.33 \pm 1.76 ^b	44.00 \pm 1.47 ^b
T3	35.67 \pm 0.33 ^c	38.00 \pm 1.15 ^b	37.33 \pm 0.67 ^c	37.00 \pm 0.71 ^c
T4	32.00 \pm 1.00 ^c	31.33 \pm 0.88 ^c	29.67 \pm 1.33 ^d	31.00 \pm 1.07 ^d

T₁: Control, T₂: 50 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₃: 100 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₄: 150 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet.

Means having different superscript at the same column are significantly different ($P < 0.01$).

trait (Table 3). The significant decrease in seminal plasma protein due to the addition of carnitine to diets of drakes is an important indicator for predicting fertility and hatchability rates and semen quality, as Moustafa and

Table 3. Effect of dietary L-carnitine on seminal plasma protein (g/dl) (Mean \pm SE) of drakes.

Treatments	Periods			Overall mean
	First month	Second month	Third month	
T1	2.10 \pm 0.21 ^a	2.00 \pm 0.10 ^a	1.91 \pm 0.04 ^a	2.00 \pm 0.11a
T2	1.47 \pm 0.27 ^b	0.95 \pm 0.02 ^b	1.70 \pm 0.02 ^b	1.37 \pm 0.10b
T3	0.94 \pm 0.02 ^{b,c}	0.80 \pm 0.03 ^b	0.82 \pm 0.04 ^c	0.85 \pm 0.03c
T4	0.59 \pm 0.09 ^c	0.54 \pm 0.04 ^c	0.61 \pm 0.03 ^d	0.58 \pm 0.05d

T₁: Control, T₂: 50 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₃: 100 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₄: 150 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet.

Means having different superscript at the same column are significantly different (P<0.01).

Meszaros (1980) found an inverse relationship between seminal plasma protein and spermatozoa motility and fertility and hatchability rates, and on this basis the males with low seminal plasma protein could be selected to improve semen quality and fertility rates and hatchability rates (Thurston et al, 1982; 1992). Čeřovský et al. (2007) found significantly negative relationship between the morphologically abnormal spermatozoa content and the concentration of seminal plasma protein ($r = -0.60$, $P < 0.01$). Al- Biar (2010) recorded significant positive correlation between seminal plasma protein and percentages of dead and abnormal spermatozoa and acrosomal abnormalities. Carnitine is a water-soluble antioxidant mostly derived from the diet that may play a role in sperm energy metabolism and provide the primary fuel for sperm motility. Spermatozoa exhibit increased L-carnitine and L-acetyl carnitine content during epididymal passage and acquisition of motility (Jeulin and Lewin, 1996). Carnitines enhance the cellular energetics in mitochondria by facilitating the entry and utilisation of free fatty acids within the mitochondria and also restore the phospholipid composition of mitochondrial membranes by decreasing fatty acid oxidation (Lenzi et al., 2003). In addition, carnitines protect sperm DNA and cell membranes from ROS-induced damage and apoptosis (Lenzi et al., 2004). However, Cavallini et al. (2004) demonstrated improved morphology after 3 and 6 months of treatment with carnitine.

The results of this investigation showed that L-carnitine supplementation induced a marked decrease of seminal plasma cholesterol during all periods of experiment and with relation to the overall means of this trait as compared to those of control group (Table 4), and this decrease was directly proportional to the dose of L-carnitine. Examinations indicate that there is a connection between spermatozoa cholesterol content and certain qualitative traits in male semen (Cerolini et al., 1997). The high concentration of cholesterol in the seminal plasma is usually associated with the increase of the percentages of dead and abnormal spermatozoa and acrosomal abnormality (Al - Daraji et al., 2002 a, b). Also the high concentrations of cholesterol in the seminal plasma had an inverse relationship with fertilizing ability, as cholesterol play inhibitory effect on fusion of membranes during acrosome reaction as a result of its entering into the fatty layers consisting of the cell membrane (Vicari and Calogero, 2001). In the boars was found a positive relationship between seminal plasma cholesterol content and spermatozoa motility, whereas in poultry a negative correlation ($r = -0.279$) was reported between spermatozoa motility and sperm cholesterol content

Table 4. Effect of dietary L-carnitine on seminal plasma cholesterol (μ g/dl) (Mean \pm SE) of drakes.

Treatments	Periods			Overall mean
	First month	Second month	Third month	
T1	1.50 \pm 0.21 ^a	1.17 \pm 0.14 ^a	0.92 \pm 0.03 ^a	1.19 \pm 0.12a
T2	1.00 \pm 0.01 ^b	0.85 \pm 0.06 ^b	0.71 \pm 0.02 ^b	0.85 \pm 0.03b
T3	0.84 \pm 0.02 ^c	0.67 \pm 0.01 ^c	0.59 \pm 0.03 ^c	0.70 \pm 0.02c
T4	0.52 \pm 0.04 ^d	0.34 \pm 0.04 ^d	0.31 \pm 0.03 ^d	0.39 \pm 0.03d

T₁: Control, T₂: 50 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₃: 100 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₄: 150 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet.

Means having different superscript at the same column are significantly different (P<0.01).

(Cerolini et al., 1997). The presence of secretions of cholesterol in the lumen of the seminiferous tubules lumen and closely adherent to proteinaceous materials considered as a clear indication of cracking the seminiferous cells and release of cholesterol from these cells (Flesch et al, 2001). There appears to be no correlation between the amount of cholesterol in blood serum and that in sperm or seminal plasma, suggesting that sperm cholesterol content is regulated locally within the male reproductive tract (Grizard et al., 1995). The carnitine content of seminal fluid is directly related to sperm count and motility. Several studies indicate that carnitine supplementation may improve sperm quality. The reported benefits may relate to increased mitochondrial fatty-acid oxidation (providing more energy for sperm) and reduced cell death in the testes (Ng et al., 2004; Vicari et al., 2001). The improved semen quality in L-carnitine supplemented animals is related to the bioenergy coming from the beta-oxidation of activated long-chain fatty acids in the inner mitochondrial matrix. Mayes (2000) detailed that L-carnitine plays a major role as a cofactor in the transportation of free fatty acids from cytosol to the mitochondria.

The effect of trail diets on seminal plasma AST and ALT are presented in Table 5 and 6. The content of AST and ALT in seminal plasma decreased significantly (P<0.01) in response to L-carnitine supplementation during all periods of experiment and also respecting the overall means of this trait. The extra cellular activity of transaminases is due to their leakage into seminal

Table 5. Effect of dietary L-carnitine on seminal plasma AST activity (IU /L) (Mean \pm SE) of drakes.

Treatments	Periods			Overall mean
	First month	Second month	Third month	
T1	33.00 \pm 2.08 ^a	30.67 \pm 2.18 ^a	34.67 \pm 3.17 ^a	32.78 \pm 2.47a
T2	25.00 \pm 1.73 ^b	23.33 \pm 3.17 ^b	21.00 \pm 2.51 ^b	23.11 \pm 2.47b
T3	25.33 \pm 0.67 ^b	22.67 \pm 3.52 ^b	24.00 \pm 1.00 ^b	24.00 \pm 1.73b
T4	23.33 \pm 0.33 ^b	20.00 \pm 2.08 ^b	19.67 \pm 1.33 ^b	21.00 \pm 1.24b

T₁: Control, T₂: 50 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₃: 100 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₄: 150 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet.

Means having different superscript at the same column are significantly different (P<0.01).

Table 6. Effect of dietary L-carnitine on seminal plasma ALT activity (IU /L) (Mean \pm SE) of drakes.

Treatments	Periods			Overall mean
	First month	Second month	Third month	
T1	23.00 \pm 2.08 ^a	24.00 \pm 4.50 ^a	28.00 \pm 1.52 ^a	25.00 \pm 2.0 ^{7a}
T2	15.00 \pm 1.73 ^b	16.67 \pm 0.33 ^b	14.33 \pm 0.88 ^b	15.33 \pm 0.9 ^{8b}
T3	15.33 \pm 0.67 ^b	16.00 \pm 1.15 ^b	14.00 \pm 1.00 ^b	15.11 \pm 0.9 ^{4b}
T4	13.33 \pm 0.33 ^b	13.33 \pm 1.45 ^b	13.00 \pm 2.00 ^b	13.22 \pm 1.2 ^{6b}

T₁: Control, T₂: 50 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₃: 100 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₄: 150 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet.

Means having different superscript at the same column are significantly different (P<0.01).

plasma caused by damage inflicted upon spermatozoa (Kapila, 1992), hence seminal plasma transaminases are evaluated as an index of measurement of injury to spermatozoa incurred during different conditions (Singh et al., 1996). The enzyme release from spermatozoa has generally been viewed as cellular injury (Ingale et al., 2000), whereby membrane become inactive with altered permeability or destroyed resulting into loss of material therein (Sidhu et al., 1996). Sperm damage through oxidative stress results in increased membrane permeability to enzymes and other substances, and therefore, reduced metabolic activity of sperm (Storey, 1997). Changes in the activity of enzymes such as AST or ALT in semen plasma are associated with defects of sperm membranes (Colebrander et al., 1992). Cavallini et al. (2004) reported that carnitine protect sperm DNA and cell membranes from ROS-induced damage and apoptosis. Xuan et al. (2003) documented that maturation, respiration, motility and fertility are dependent on the progressive increase in epididymal and spermatozoa carnitine, critical for mitochondrial fatty acid oxidation, as sperm pass from caput of the epididymis. Newsletter (2000) showed that L-carnitine increased the number of viable sperm cells. During spermatogenesis, sperm cells lose a large amount of their associated cytoplasm along with antioxidant substances contained in it, and subsequently become sensitive to oxidative stress (OS). However, these cells are suitably protected against OS process because of immersion in sperm fluid containing many antioxidants such as ascorbic acid, urate, Turin, sulfhydryl (thiol) groups, catalases, superoxide dismutase and L-carnitine (Peyvandi et al., 2009). Shahrzad et al. (2013) concluded that the use of L-carnitine as a substance with antioxidant properties can at least affect some sperm parameters such as reduction of DNA and cell membrane damage through preventing more production of free radicals and enhancing antioxidant defense of cell.

Table 7 shows the effect of dietary L-carnitine supplementation on seminal plasma activity of alkaline phosphatase. The supplement of 50, 100 or 150 mg/kg L-carnitine increased (P \leq 0.01) the seminal plasma activity of alkaline phosphatase during all periods of experiment and with respect to the overall means of this trait compared to control group. Alka-

line phosphatase is a main secretion of the epididymis, the organ that plays a crucial role in the sperm cells' maturation, but the activity of this enzyme was also determined in the cytoplasmic droplets of the sperm cells, which suggests its association with glycogen metabolism in epididymal epithelium, thus supplying the maturing spermatozoa with energy (Arangasamy et al., 2005). Alkaline phosphatase also participates in producing free semen fructose, which, after fructolysis, provides the energy indispensable for the sperm cells' motility (Borkowski and Strzeżek, 1994). Variable levels of alkaline phosphatase activity have been reported in the semen plasma of men, dogs, toms, bulls, rabbits, rams, goats, buffalo, cocks, turkeys, boars and camels where it is believed to be involved in sperm glycolytic reactions and fructose

Table 7. Effect of dietary L-carnitine on seminal plasma alkaline phosphatase activity (IU /L) (Mean \pm SE) of drakes.

Treatments	Periods			Overall mean
	First month	Second month	Third month	
T1	9.67 \pm 2.33 ^c	10.67 \pm 2.18 ^b	9.67 \pm 0.33 ^c	10.00 \pm 1.6 ^{1c}
T2	12.67 \pm 0.67 ^b	13.33 \pm 0.33 ^b	12.67 \pm 0.88 ^b	12.89 \pm 0.4 ^{2b}
T3	15.33 \pm 0.67 ^b	16.00 \pm 11.5 ^b	15.33 \pm 0.33 ^a	15.55 \pm 4.1 ^{6b}
T4	18.67 \pm 0.67 ^a	22.00 \pm 2.64 ^a	16.67 \pm 2.96 ^a	19.11 \pm 2.0 ^{9a}

T₁: Control, T₂: 50 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₃: 100 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet, T₄: 150 mg L-carnitine /kg of diet.

Means having different superscript at the same column are significantly different (P<0.01).

formation (Turner and McDonnell, 2003). Alibawi et al. (2012) concluded that the level of ALP in the seminal plasma and sperms correlated with the concentration of the sperms. Stasiak et al. (201) found that the seminal plasma acid and alkaline phosphatase activity correlated positively with the sperm concentration (r = 0.5676; r = 0.6302; P < 0.01) and negatively with the ejaculate volume (r = -0.3456; r = -0.2783, P < 0.01). The sperm quality and function improves with the intake of complementary L-carnitine. A positive correlation has been reported between free L-carnitine and sperm count (r = 0.617; P < 0.01), sperm motility (r = 0.614; P < 0.01), and the number of motile spermatozoa / ml (r = 0.646; P < 0.01) (Agarwal, 2004). L-carnitine, which is an essential cofactor for fatty acid metabolism, is present in epididymal plasma and spermatozoa at a concentration of 1-63 mM, while the blood plasma concentration is about 50 mM. L-carnitine provides valuable support for the male reproductive system and plays an important role in sperm energy metabolism and support semen quality (El-Nattat et al., 2011).

Conclusion

In conclusion the administration of L-carnitine has ameliorated the semen plasma characters of Iraqi drakes, therefore L-carnitine can be used as an efficient feed additive for improve reproductive performance of drakes.

REFERENCE

- Adabi, S.G., A.H. Babaei, H. Lotfollahian, T. Farahvash and F.M. Pour. 2008. L-carnitine effect on quantity and quality of African black neck ostrich sperm. *Asian J. Anim. Vet. Adv.*, 3: 369-374. | Agarwal, A. 2004. Carnitines and male infertility. *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, 8 (4): 376-384. www.rbmonline.com/Article/1200 on web 3 February 24. | Al-Biar, M. A. 2010. Effect of dietary supplementation with different levels of L-arginine on reproductive performance of local turkey. M.Sc.Thesis, College of Agriculture, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq. | Al-Daraji, H. J. 2001. Sperm-egg penetration in laying breeder flocks: A technique for the prediction of fertility. *Br. Poult. Sci.* 42: 266-270. | Al-Daraji, H.J. 2002. Studies of the semen characteristics of certain breeds of Iraqi cocks. *Iraqi J. Agric. Sci.* 33: 257- 262. | Al-Daraji, H. J., 2007a. Artificial insemination in domestic birds. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, University of Baghdad, College of Agriculture, Baghdad, Iraq. | Al-Daraji, H. J., 2007b. Avian Reproductive Physiology. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, University of Baghdad, College of Agriculture, Baghdad, Iraq. | Al-Daraji, H. J., A. J. Al-Rawi and B. T. O. Al-Tikriti. 2002 a. Study of the semen traits of Barred Plymouth Rock, New Hampshire and local roosters. *Iraqi J. Agric. Sci.* 33 (6): 255 – 260. | Al-Daraji, H. J., B. T. O. Al-Tikriti and A. J. Al-Rawi. 2002 b. Study of the semen traits of indigenous roosters reared during summer months. *Iraqi J. Agric. Sci.* 33 (1): 223 – 228. | Alibawi, F. N. A., S. Y. Al-Morshidy and A. G. Alhuweizi. 2012. The alkaline phosphatase levels in the seminal plasma and sperms of sub-fertile patients and normospermic men. International Conference on Applied Life Sciences (ICALS2012), Turkey, September 10-12, 2012. Pp: 217-222. | Allain, C.A., L. S. Poon, C.S.G. Chang, W. Richmond and P.C. Fu. 1974. Enzymatic determination of total serum cholesterol. *Clin. Chem.*, 20: 470-475. | Ingale, N. D., B. N. Suthar, and V. K. Sharma. 2000. Pellet freezing of ram semen and associated alterations in enzyme activity. *Indian J. Anim. Sci.* 70: 839-840. | Arangasamy, A., L.P. Singh, N. Ahmed, M.R. Ansari and G.C. Ram. 2005. Isolation and characterization of heparin and gelatin binding buffalo seminal plasma proteins and their effect on cauda epididymal spermatozoa. *Anim. Reprod. Sci.* 90: 243-254. | Arrigoni-Martelli E. and V. Caso. 2001. Carnitine protects mitochondria and removes toxic acyls from xenobiotics. *Drug Exp. Clin. Res.* 27: 27-49. | Baumgartner, M. and R. Blum. 1997. Typical L-Carnitine Contents in Feedstuffs. In: L-Carnitine in Animal Nutrition, Baumgartner, M. (Ed.). Lonza, Basel, Switzerland, pp: 102. | Borkowski, K. and J. Strzeżek. 1994. The use of biochemical indicators to evaluate semen quality. *Medycyna Wet.* 50: 200-202. | Buyse, J., G.P.J. Janssens and E. Decuyper, 2001. The effects of dietary L-carnitine supplementation on the performance, organ weights and circulating hormone and metabolite concentrations of broiler chickens reared under a normal or low temperature schedule. *Br. Poult. Sci.*, 42: 230-241. | Cavallini, G., A. P.Ferraretti, L. Gianaroli, G. Biagiotti and G. Vitali. 2004. Cinnoxican and L-carnitine/acetyl-L-carnitine treatment for idiopathic and varicocele-associated oligoasthenospermia. *J. Androl.* 25: 761-770. | Cerolini, S., K. A. Kelso, R. C. Noble, B. K. Speake, F. Pizzi, L. G. Cavalchini. 1997. Relationship between spermatozoan lipid composition and fertility during aging of chickens. *Biol. Reprod.* 57: 976-980. | Cerolini, S., P.E. Surai, B.K. Speake and N.H. Sparks. 2005. Dietary fish and evening primrose oil with vitamin E effects on semen variables in cockerels. *Br. Poult. Sci.*, 46: 214-222. | Čeřovský, J., S. Frydrychová, A. Lustyková, M. Rozkot. 2007. Relationship between abnormal spermatozoa and seminal plasma free amino acids in boars. *Czech J. Anim. Sci.* 52 (2): 44-49. | Colenbrander, B., A. R. Fazeli, A. Vanbuiten, J. Parleviet and M. Gadella. 1992. Assessment of sperm cell-membrane integrity in the horse. *Acta Vet. Scand. Suppl.* 88: 49-58. | Córdum, M., N. Ceylan and F. Ildiz. 2007. Effects of dietary density and L-carnitine supplementation on growth performance, carcass traits and blood parameters of broiler chickens. *S. Afr. J. Anim. Sci.*, 37: 65-73. | De-Beer, M. and C.N. Coon. 2009. The effect of different feed restriction programs and dietary L-carnitine supplementation on reproductive performance, efficiency, frame size and uniformity in broiler breeder hens. *Int. J. Poult. Sci.*, 8: 409-425. | Duncan, D.B., 1955. Multiple range and multiple F tests. *Biometrics*, 11, 1-42. | El-Nattat, W. S., R. I. El-Sheshtawy and A. A. Mohamed. 2011. Effect of L-Carnitine on Semen Characteristics of Chilled Rabbit Semen. *Glob. J. Biotech. Biochem.* (1): 8-12. | Enomoto, A., M. Wempe and H. Tsuchida. 2002. Molecular identification of a novel carnitine transporter specific to human testis. Insights into the mechanism of carnitine recognition. *J. Biol. Chem.* 277: 36262-36271. | Flesch, F. M., J. F. H. M. Brouwers, P. F. E. M. Nievelestein, A. J. Verkleij, L. M. G. van Golde, B. Colenbrander and B. M. Gadella. 2001. Bicarbonate stimulated phospholipid scrambling induces cholesterol redistribution and enables cholesterol depletion in the sperm plasma membrane. *J. Cell Sci.* 114: 3543-3555. | Grizard, G., B. Sion, P. Jouanel, P. Benoit and D. Boucher. 1995. Cholesterol phospholipids and markers of the function of the accessory sex glands in the semen of men with hypercholesterolemia. *Int. J. Androl.* 18: 151-156. | Hoppel, C. 2003. The role of carnitine in normal and altered fatty acid metabolism. *Am J Kidney Dis* 41(Suppl.4): S4-12. | Jacyno, E., A. Kołodziej, M. Kamyżek, M. Kawęcka, K. Dziadek and A. Pietruszka. 2007. Effect of L-carnitine supplementation on boar semen quality. *Acta Vet. Brno* 76: 595-600. | Kalaiselvi, C. J. and C. Panneerselvam. 1998. Effect of L-carnitine on the status of lipid peroxidation and antioxidants in ageing rats. *J. Nutr. Biochem.* 9: 575-581. | Kapila, R. 1992. Leakage of Enzymes during Freezing of Goat Semen. M. Sc. Dissertation. N. D. R. I. (Deemed University), Karnal. Kind, P. R. and E. J. King. 1954. Estimation of plasma phosphatase by determination of hydrolysed phenol with amino anti – antipyrine. *J. Clin. Path.*, 7: 322-326. | Matalliotakis, I., Y. Youmantaki and A. Evageliou. 2000. L-carnitine levels in the seminal plasma of fertile and infertile men: correlation with sperm quality. *Int. J. Fert.* 45: 236-240. | Mayes, P.A., 2000. Lipids of physiologic significance. In: R.K. Murray, D.K. Granner, P.A. Mayes and V.W. Rodwell, (eds). *Harper's Biochemistry*. 25 edition, Appleton and Lange, Stamford, pp: 160-171. | Moustafa, A. R. and I. M. Meszaros. 1980. Interrelationship between the total protein content of bovine seminal plasma and behavior of the spermatozoa after freezing and thawing. *Acta Veterinaria Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica*, 28: 403 – 408. | National Research Council. 1994. Nutrient Requirements of Poultry, 9th revised ed. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. | Neuman, S.L., T.L. Lin and P.Y. Hester. 2002. The effect of dietary carnitine on semen traits of white leghorn roosters. *Poult. Sci.*, 81: 495-503. | Newsletter, A.S., 2000. Akey's field trial experience with L-carnitine supplementation of boar diets. Lewisburg, OH: Akey Inc., pp: 1. | Ng, C. M., M. R. Blackman, C. Wang, R. S. Swerdloff. 2004. The role of carnitine in the male reproductive system. *Ann. NY Acad. Sci.* 1033:177-188. | Peyvandi, S., A. Karimpour and N. Moslemizadeh, 2009. Investigation of the effect of L-carnitine on improving the parameters of infertile men's sperm, a cross-sectional clinical trial, Tehran. *Fert. Infert.* J., 10(4): 245-251. | Ramsay, R. R., Gandour, R. D., Van Der Leij and F. R. 2001. Molecular enzymology of carnitine transfer and transport. *Biochem. Biophys. Acta* 1546: 21-43. | Reitman, S. and S. Frankel. 1957. A colorimetric method for the determination of serum GOT and GPT., *Americ. J. Clin. Path.* 28: 56-63. | Rezaei, M., A. Attar, A. Ghodrathnama and H. Kermanshahi. 2007. Study the effects of different levels of fat and L-carnitine on performance, carcass characteristics and serum composition of broiler chicks. *Pak. J. Biol. Sci.*, 10: 1970-1976. | Sarica, S., M. Córdum, M. Suicmez, F. Cedden, M. Yildirim and K. Kilinc. 2007. The effects of dietary L-carnitine supplementation on semen traits, reproductive parameters, and testicular histology of Japanese quail breeders. *J. Applied Poul. Res.*, 16: 178-186. | SAS Institute. 2004. SAS/STAT User's Guide. Release Version 7.00. SAS Institute. Cary. North Carolina. | Shahrazad, E., S. Zahiri, F. Ghasemi, and H. K. Jahromi. 213. A study of effects of L-carnitine on morphology and apoptosis in cryopreserved Sperm. *Adv. Environm. Biol.* 7(9): 2126-2134. | Sidhu, S. S., G. R. Pangawkar and R. K. Chaudhary. 1996. Effect of some additives on the release of enzymes from buffalo spermatozoa during cryopreservation. *Indian Vet. J.* 73: 154-158. | Singh, M. P., A. K. Sinha, B. K. Sinha and R. L. Prasad. 1996. Effect of cryoprotectants on release of various enzymes from buck spermatozoa during freezing. *Theriogenology*, 45: 405-416. | Stasiak, K., B. Janicki and B. Kupcewicz. 2010. Biologic parameters of polar fox (*Alopex lagopus* L.) semen during the breeding season. *Turk. J. Vet. Anim. Sci.* 34(4): 327-331. | Storey, B. T. 1997. Biochemistry of the induction and prevention of lipoperoxidative damage in human spermatozoa. *Mol. Hum. Reprod.* 3: 203-213. | Szilagyi, M. 1998. L-carnitine as essential methylated compound in animal metabolism. *Acta Biol. Hung.* 49: 209-218. | Thurston, R. J., R. A. Hess and N. Korn. 1992. Seminal plasma protein concentration as a predictor of fertility and hatchability in large white domestic turkeys. *J. Appl. Poult. Res.* 1: 335 - 338. | Thurston, R. J., R. A. Hess, D. P. Fromann and H. V. Biellier. 1982. Elevated seminal plasma protein: A characteristic of yellow turkey semen. *Poult. Sci.* 61:1905 - 1911. | Trinder, P., 1969. Determination of glucose in blood using glucose oxidase with an alternative oxygen acceptor. *Ann. Clin. Biochem.* 6: 24-27. | Turner, R. M. O. and S. M. McDonnell. 2003. Alkaline phosphatase in stallion semen: characterization and clinical applications. *Theriogenology*, 60: 1-10. | Vaz, F.M., and R. J.Wanders. 2002. Carnitine biosynthesis in mammals. *Biochem. J.* 361: 417-429. | Vicari, E. and A. E. Calogero. 2001. Effects of treatment with carnitine in infertile patients with prostate-vesiculo-epididymitis. *Human Reproduction*, 16 (11): 2338 – 2342. | Währner, M., Geyer, M., Hallfarth, G. and U. Hühn. 2004. Der Einfluss von Zulagen einer Vitaminemulsion mit L-Carnitin auf die Spermaeigenschaften von Besamungsebern. *Zuchtungskunde* 76: 196-207. | Wootton, I. D. P. and H. Freeman. 1982. Proteins, microanalysis in medical biochemistry. 6th edition. New York:Churchill Livingstone. | Xu, Z.R., M.Q. Wang, H.X. Mao, X.A. Zhan and C.H. Hu. 2003. Effects of L-carnitine on growth performance, carcass composition and metabolism of lipids in male broilers. *Poult. Sci.*, 82: 408-413. | Xuan, W., A.M. Lambonwah, C. Librach, K. Jarvi and I. Tein. 2003. Characterization of organic cation/carnitine transporter family in human sperm. *Bioch. Biophys. Res. Com.* 306: 121-128. | Zhai, W., S.L. Neuman, M.A. Latour and P.Y. Hester. 2007. The effect of dietary L-carnitine on semen traits of white leghorns. *Poult. Sci.*, 86: 2228-2235.