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Santiago-Moreno, Elisabeth Blesbois

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**Original Research Paper** 1

## Revised

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- B. A. Rakha<sup>1</sup>\*, M. S. Ansari<sup>2</sup>, S. Akhter<sup>3</sup>, Z. Zafar<sup>1</sup>, A. Naseer<sup>1</sup>, I. Hussain<sup>1</sup>, J. Santiago-5 Moreno<sup>4</sup>, E. Blesbois<sup>5</sup> 6
- <sup>1</sup>Department of Wildlife Management, Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University 7

- Pakistan 10
- <sup>3</sup>Department of Zoology, Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi-46300, 11
- Pakistan 12
- <sup>4</sup>Department of Animal Reproduction, INIA, Avda. Puerta de Hierro Km 5,9, 28040 Madrid, 13

Spain 14

- <sup>5</sup>INRA, UMR85 Physiologie de la Reproduction et des Comportements, F-37380 Nouzilly, 15
- 37380, Nouzilly, France 16
- Running Title: Cryopreservation of Indian red jungle fowl sperm with DMA 17
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- <sup>a</sup>Corresponding Author: 20
- Dr. Bushra Allah Rakha 21
- Department of Wildlife Management 22
- Pir Mehr Ali Shah, Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi-46300, Pakistan 23
- Mobile: +92-300-2020625 24
- Email: bushrauaar@gmail.com 25

Rawalpindi-46300, Pakistan <sup>2</sup>Department of Zoology, University of Sargodha, Lyallpur Campus, Faisalabad-38000, 9

26 ABSTRACT

It was hypothesized that dimethyleacetamide (DMA) can be used as an alternate to glycerol 27 for cryopreservation of Indian red jungle fowl semen. Four concentrations of DMA (4%, 6%, 28 29 8% and 10%) in extender were compared with previously optimized cryopreservation protocol based on 20% glycerol (control) for Indian red jungle fowl. Sperm motility, plasma 30 membrane integrity, viability, and acrosome integrity were assessed at the stage of post-31 dilution, cooling, equilibration, and freeze-thawing. The whole experiment was 32 repeated/replicated for five times independently. Sperm motility, plasma membrane integrity, 33 34 viability and acrosome integrity were recorded highest (P<0.05) at post-dilution, cooling, equilibration, and freeze-thawing in extender having 6% DMA compared to control and other 35 experimental extenders. The highest (P<0.05) recovery rates of all aforementioned 36 37 parameters were also recorded in extender having 6% DMA; thus, 6% DMA was further compared with control (20% glycerol) for fertility after artificial insemination. Eggs were 38 collected for five days after artificial insemination with semen cryopreserved in extender 39 40 containing 6% DMA and control. The higher no. of fertilized eggs, fertility, no. of hatched eggs, hatch (%) and hatchability were recorded with semen cryopreserved in extender having 41 6% DMA compared to control. It is concluded that 6% DMA maintained higher post-thaw 42 quality and fertility of Indian red jungle fowl semen and is a better replacement of glycerol. 43

Keywords: Cryo-damage; Motility; Fertility; Acrosome; Sperm viability; Indian red jungle
fowl

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#### 51 1. Introduction

Cryopreservation provides safety net against the stochastic events of nature; 52 continuously at work and playing role in the deletion of valuable genetic resource [1]. During 53 the last few decades, increasing human population has resulted in extreme exploitation and 54 selection pressure in poultry birds that pushed indigenous or local species/breeds in the 55 background, disposing of valuable genes [2,3]. According to Domestic Animal Diversity 56 Information System, about 50% of the poultry species have been enlisted in endangered 57 category [4]. The Indian red jungle fowl is a wild sub-species of genus Gallus, and is 58 59 considered as one of the ancestor of domestic chicken [5-10]. The population of Indian red jungle fowl is facing a notable threat in its native range due to habitat destruction, poaching, 60 inbreeding and genetic hybridization [11]. The cryo-banking has great potential for 61 62 application in *ex situ in vitro* conservation of this precious Gallus sub-species [12]. Semen cryopreservation is the most feasible method in birds as cryopreservation of oocyte or 63 embryo is not possible because of large size, high lipid content and polar organization [13], 64 and alternative methodologies such as primordial germ cells methodologies are too invasive 65 for at risk populations [14, 15]. 66

It is generally accepted that avian sperm has low surface to volume ratio and 67 elongated tail that makes it more vulnerable to osmotic, chemical, thermal and physical 68 stresses during cryopreservation process compared to mammalian sperm [16,17]. Freeze-69 70 thawing process not only causes irreversible damage to mitochondria, mid-piece and acrosome of sperm [18], but also induces physical and chemical changes that alter 71 physiological processes. Sperm may lose ATP due to energy metabolism [19] and 72 73 glycoproteins or glycolipids necessary for transport and maturation [16,20].

The species-specific differences in sperm and their response to freeze-thaw process 74 are important determinants of fertility and need the development of successful freezing 75

protocol, identification of novel cryoprotectants and diluents [21]. Of all cryoprotectants available, glycerol and dimethyleacetamide (DMA) are considered more adequate [14,22]. Glycerol is least toxic and more effective cryoprotectant for low fertility lines of poultry [14]. Nevertheless, due to its contraceptive properties removal of glycerol is needed prior to artificial insemination that makes it difficult to use [7, 23-25]. Glycerol is also known to interact with the metabolism of sperm, alter lipid-bilayer that possibly decreases the efficiency of acrosome reaction [26, 27].

The DMA is a permeable cryoprotectant, is not contraceptive and does not need to be 83 removed prior to artificial insemination; thus may be helpful in reducing damage due to 84 cryoprotectant removal [14]. Furthermore, DMA may offer an alternative since high levels of 85 fertility have been obtained with this cryoprotectant in chicken [28,29]. DMA has the 86 capacity of penetration by increasing plasma membrane fluidity through the rearrangement of 87 lipids and proteins that cause reduction in formation of ice-crystallization at low temperature 88 [21,30]. DMA has been used as cryoprotectant for sperm in houbara bustards [31], fowls 89 [29,32], eagles, and peregrine falcons [33,34], ducks [35], landese ganders [36], sandhill 90 cranes and turkeys [37], Japanese quail [38], and emus [39]. However, the intensity of cryo-91 induced changes are highly species-specific [30,40,41]. One major disadvantage of DMA is 92 the toxic effect associated with its concentration [34]. In a previous study, we showed that 93 glycerol could be an efficient cryoprotectant for red-jungle fowl sperm cryopreservation [9]. 94 However, considering the importance of semen cryo-banking for conserving valuable genetic 95 resources of Indian red jungle fowl, and in order to simplify the cryopreservation process of 96 red-jungle fowl sperm, the present study was planned to evaluate the use of different 97 concentrations of DMA on quality and fertility of cryopreserved Indian red jungle fowl 98 99 sperm.

100

101 2. Materials and methods

102 All experimental procedures and animals used in this study were approved by the 103 ethical committee of the Department of Wildlife Management, PMAS-Arid Agriculture 104 University Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

105 2.1. Experimental animals

Eight sexually mature cocks (age: 5 years) of Indian red jungle fowl (Gallus gallus 106 murghi) were selected and raised at Avian Research Station, Pir Mehr Ali shah Arid 107 Agriculture University Rawalpindi-Pakistan. The birds were housed in single sand floor pen 108  $(8 \text{ m}^2)$  with roof cover and kept under natural photoperiod and temperature conditions. They 109 were fed commercial feed containing corn 61.0%, rice polish 4%, corn gluten 1%, canola 110 meal 5%, rapeseed meal 2%, soybean meal 13%, sunflower meal 4%, limestone 8%, DL. 111 Methionine 0.10%, soda bicarb 0.10%, salt 0.30%, vitamin and min. premix 0.40% and 112 MDCP 1%. Water was available over the experimental period ad libitum. 113

#### 114 2.2. Experimental design

Semen was collected from eight mature cocks twice a week (October 2015-March 115 2016). A total of 40 ejaculates (5 ejaculates/cock) were processed for semen analysis. 116 Ejaculates (whole) having >60% motility were pooled and aliquoted for dilution in to five 117 experimental extenders. Experiment involved the addition of DMA at 4%, 6%, 8% and 10% 118 of extender and 20% glycerol as a control. Semen was cryopreserved and quality was 119 120 assessed at post-dilution, post-cooling, post-equilibration and post thawing. The whole experiment was repeated/replicated for five times independently. Ten pools of semen with 121 6% DMA and 20% glycerol were used to inseminate 50 hens. A total of 80 ejaculates (10 122 123 ejaculates/cock) were frozen for each extender separately. Five hens per extender were inseminated with each pool of semen and fertility was estimated through the fertilized and 124 unfertilized eggs collected up to 5 days following insemination. 125

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#### 2.3. Semen collection and dilution with freezing extender

Semen was collected twice a week as described by Burrows and Quinn [42] in a 128 graduated plastic tube using massage technique. Qualifying ejaculates from eight cocks were 129 pooled on each replicate. Each pool was immediately diluted 1:1 (v/v) using diluent 130 comprised of D-fructose (1.15g), sodium glutamate (2.1g), polyvinylpyrrolidone (0.6g), 131 glycine (0.2g) potassium acetate (0.5g) and distilled water (100mL) to final pH (7.0) and 132 osmolarity 380mOsm/kg [7]. Precaution of the temperature shock was taken, and thus the 133 134 tubes containing diluents were kept in water bath at 37°C. The extender was divided into 5 experimental extenders containing respectively 4%, 6%, 8%, 10% DMA, and 20% glycerol 135 (control). All diluents and media were prepared in the laboratory using analytical grade 136 chemicals purchased from Sigma-Aldrich, Co., 3050 Spruce street, St Louis, USA. 137

## 138 2.4. Cryopreservation and thawing of semen

The semen (mean concentration  $1200 \times 10^6$  sperm/mL) diluted in freezing extenders 139 were immediately cooled to 4 °C in two hours (0.275 °C min-1) and equilibrated for 10 min 140 at 4°C. Cooled semen was filled in 0.5 mL French straws (IMV, L'Aigle, France), kept over 141 liquid nitrogen vapors for 10 minutes and plunged into liquid nitrogen for storage. After 24 142 hours, the straws were thawed for 30 sec in water bath at 37 °C and held at 37 °C to assess 143 motility, plasma membrane integrity, viability, and acrosomal integrity. For fertility 144 145 measurements, semen frozen with 6% DMA and 20% glycerol were thawed as previously described and used in artificial insemination. Glycerol was removed after thawing by 146 following stepwise dilution protocol as suggested by Purdy et al. [43]. 147

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149 2.5. Semen quality assays

150 *2.5.1. Motility* 

- The percentage of motile sperm and the quality of sperm were assessed subjectively as described by Santiago-Moreno et al. [16]. Semen sample was placed on a pre-warmed (37°C) glass slide and observed under a phase contrast microscope (400x).
- 154 2.5.2. Plasma membrane integrity

Plasma membrane integrity at different stages of cryopreservation was assessed by 155 using hypo-osmotic swelling test (HOST) as described by Santiago-Moreno et al. [44]. The 156 HOS solution composed of sodium citrate (1g) and distilled water (100 mL). Previously 157 diluted 25 µl semen was mixed with 500 µl of a HOS solution (100 mOsm/kg) and incubated 158 at 37°C for 30 minutes. The slides were fixed in buffered 2% glutaraldehyde. The plasma 159 membrane integrity of sperm was scored on the basis of swollen heads, swollen and coiled 160 tails. The sperm that respond to HOS solution become swollen and coiled were classified as 161 normal sperm having intact plasma membrane. Nevertheless, sperm that did not respond to 162 HOS solution remained straight were classified as sperm with damaged plasma membrane. A 163 total of 200 sperm were counted at four separate fields under a phase-contrast microscope 164 (1000x with oil immersion). 165

166 2.5.3. Sperm viability

Viability (% Live / total sperm) at different stages of cryopreservation was examined 167 by adding eosin-nigrosin to the lake glutamate solution. Lake's glutamate solution [45] was 168 prepared by adding sodium glutamate (0.01735g), potassium citrate (0.00128g), sodium 169 acetate (0.0085g) and magnesium chloride (0.000676g) in 100 mL distilled water. Water 170 soluble nigrosin (5g) and water soluble Eosin-bluish (1g) were added into Lake's glutamate 171 solution. Twelve drops of stain were mixed with 1 drop of semen. A smear was made on a 172 glass slide, fixed and air dried. A total of 200 sperm were assessed per slide under a phase-173 contrast microscope (1000x with oil immersion). The mixture provides a clear background in 174

the smear to enhance the contrast of white, unstained "live" sperm or the pinkish stained"dead" sperm.

177 2.5.4. Acrosomal integrity

The percentage of sperm having intact acrosome was determined by phase contrast 178 microscopy, examining 200 Giemsa blue-stained cells under the magnification of 1000x as 179 described by Jianzhong and Zhang [46]. Giemsa staining involved spreading of 5µl of diluted 180 semen on to a glass slide, allowing them to dry and then fixed in neutral formal-saline (5% 181 formaldehyde) for 30 min followed by air-drying. Fixed slides were kept in Giemsa stain for 182 1.5 h and washed with distilled water and air-dried. Sperm with hooked, swollen, thinned, 183 unstained and missing acrosome were classified as sperm having damaged acrosome. 184 However, evenly stained spermatozoa were classified as normal sperm having intact 185 186 acrosome. A total of 200 sperm were observed at least in four separate fields. All variables were analyzed by the same person. 187

#### 188 2.6. Recovery rate for semen quality parameters

189 The recovery rate of sperm motility, plasma membrane integrity, viability and 190 acrosomal integrity rate were calculated through following formula [7,36];

Recovery rate = 
$$\frac{\text{Value of a given parameter in frozen semen}}{\text{Value of a given parameter in fresh semen}} \times 100$$

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### 192 2.7. Artificial insemination

The fertilization capacity of sperm was estimated from the results of two consecutive (at one day interval) intravaginal artificial inseminations involving 300 million sperm/female at each insemination. A total of 50 hens of Indian red jungle fowl were inseminated using 6% DMA and 20% glycerol. All inseminations were performed between 12:00 and 14:00 h as described by Burrows and Quinn [47]. Eggs were collected from day 2 after the first

insemination up to 6 days, and there were a mean of 50 eggs/treatment. Fertility(% fertile/incubated eggs) was determined by candling of eggs on day 7 of incubation.

200 2.8. *Statistical analysis* 

The data were presented as means ( $\pm$ SEM). The effect of different stages of cryopreservation and the cryoprotectant concentration were analyzed by two factor ANOVA using (MSTAT-C®; version 1.42, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA). When F-ratio was found significant (P<0.05), post hoc comparison between the means was done through Fisher's protected LSD test. Student t-distribution under the notion of comparing two independent groups (6% DMA vs 20% glycerol) was used to test the influence of cryoprotectant on fertility rate.

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#### 209 **3. Results**

The data on effect of DMA on motility, plasma membrane integrity, viability and 210 acrosome integrity of Indian red jungle fowl spermatozoa are presented in Figure 1. Sperm 211 motility, plasma membrane integrity, viability and acrosome integrity of Indian red jungle 212 fowl spermatozoa was recorded higher (P<0.05) in extender having 6% DMA compared to 213 control and other experimental extenders with 4%, 8%, 10% DMA at all stages of 214 cryopreservation. Nevertheless, cryopreservation have significantly (P<0.05) negative effect 215 on motility, plasma membrane integrity, viability and acrosome integrity of Indian red jungle 216 fowl spermatozoa irrespective of experimental extenders. 217

The data on recovery rates of motility, plasma membrane integrity, viability and acrosome integrity of Indian red jungle fowl spermatozoa after cryopreservation are given in Table 1. The recovery rates of all aforementioned parameters were recorded higher (P<0.05) in extender having 6% DMA compared to control and other experimental extenders.

The results of fertility obtained after artificial insemination of frozen-thawed semen with 6% DMA or 20% glycerol (Control) are given in Table 2. The highest (P<0.05) no. of fertilized eggs, percent fertility, no. of hatched chicks, percent hatch and hatchability of fertilized eggs were recorded after AI with 6% DMA compared to 20% glycerol.

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#### 227 **4. Discussion**

Gamete cryopreservation methodology has been developed for a wide range of 228 species over the last sixty-five years [47]. The success of sperm cryopreservation depends on 229 many factors including the type of cryoprotectant, packaging method (straws and pellet), 230 freezing and thawing rates for avian species [13,17, 29] that are responsible for the alteration 231 of structure and function of sperm [48]. Cryoprotectants help to prevent enzyme denaturation, 232 protein destabilization, and ice crystal formation during freeze-thaw process [49]. The most 233 commonly used cryoprotectant for avian sperm are glycerol [50] and DMA [51]. It has been 234 demonstrated that 20% glycerol can be used in cryopreservation of Indian red jungle fowl 235 sperm [7], while information on use of DMA is lacking in published literature. The previous 236 studies on chicken and turkey have reported that sperm cryopreservation with DMA/straws 237 produced less fertility compared to sperm cryopreserved with glycerol [51]. It is believed that 238 low fertility with DMA/straws based cryopreservation has been attributed to deleterious 239 interaction of plastic straws and the DMA. Moreover, this type of interaction is more 240 deleterious and spectacular to sperm viability in the species having low fertility. The sperm 241 cryopreservation with DMA is recommended for species having high fertility compared to 242 glycerol, as high technical skills are needed to remove glycerol before artificial insemination 243 [14]. The present study showed that 6% DMA efficiently protect Indian red jungle fowl 244 sperm during cryopreservation and yielded higher fertility rate compared to glycerol. 245

246 It is well known that stages of the cryopreservation (post-dilution, post-cooling, postequilibration, before freezing and after freezing, post-thawing) do affect sperm survival and 247 are highly dependable on the diluent and cryoprotectant used. In our study, damages to sperm 248 249 motility occurred first from post-dilution to post-cooling and were much higher with 10% and 4% DMA (10% decrease), intermediate with 8% DMA (6% decrease) and control 20 % 250 Glycerol (6%) and very less in extender having 6% DMA (3.7%). The second part of damage 251 occurred from post-cooling to post equilibrium stage of cryopreservation; very less at 6% 252 DMA (5%) compared to 13-21% damage at other concentrations of DMA. Finally, the 253 254 freezing-thawing itself was more deleterious as it cumulated the combined effects of the huge temperature and osmotic stress of the freezing that induced membrane and metabolic injuries 255 256 at thawing such as potential re-crystallization of ice crystals imposed by the disruption of 257 proteins that may cause further cell damage [52,53]. However, in our study, the freezingthawing stages induced significantly less damage of sperm (22% for sperm motility with the 258 dose of 6% DMA) compared to control 20% glycerol (38%) and 4%, 8%, 10% DMA (23-259 27%). The damage reported during cryopreservation was very high in the previous studies on 260 chicken [54,55] and duck [35]. It is relevant to mention that higher concentrations of DMA 261 are considered very toxic to rooster sperm [22]. 262

It is relevant to discuss that Tselutin et al. [29] recommended the use of DMA in a sperm cryopreservation process in pellets achieved by dropping diluted sperm samples directly into liquid nitrogen. Rapid freezing is usually employed with DMA [56], while slow freezing using nitrogen vapour in combination with packaging straws are usually used with dimethyl sulphoxide [57] and glycerol [50]. A cryopreservation method with semen packaged in straws was chosen in our study because the sperm freezing in nitrogen vapour was usually used in our lab and other labs working with avian spermatozoa. Contrary to previous reports,

our findings revealed higher fertility rates than previous reports in chickens employing both
DMA in straws [43] and pellets [12].

As DMA is toxic to spermatozoa [15,22], the concentration used is therefore very important. It should be noted that the sperm of native Mediterranean breed of chicken are not very tolerant of DMA, and concentrations lower than 6% are recommended [12]. Although a similar condition could be expected in the Indian red jungle fowl [12], the present results showed that DMA 6% provided the greater cryoprotective activity. Moreover, DMA 6% improved the fertility results regarding to previously used glycerol 20% protocol for Indian red jungle fowl sperm.

For fertility, higher glycerol concentration was kept as control because in our previous 279 study, higher glycerol concentration gave better results [7]. Both glycerol and DMA are 280 permeable cryoprotectants that provide intra and extracellular protection, dehydrating the 281 sperm by an osmotically driven flow of water and thus avoid ice crystal formation during 282 cryopreservation process [23,32]. Permeable cryoprotectants improve membrane fluidity and 283 284 thus increase ability to survive post-thawing [21]. However, many permeable cryoprotectants such as DMA may have toxic effect on sperm, that is directly related to cryoprotectant 285 concentration used and time to cell exposure [58,59]. Thus, the dose balances between a 286 positive cryoprotectant effect and a negative toxic effect is important. In the present study, 287 the optimum evolved concentration of DMA was 6%. The previous work on Houbara bustard 288 289 [31] and chicken [60] would confer our results that sperm cryopreserved in an extender having 6% DMA can retain their viability, motility and fertility even after cryopreservation 290 and suggest that lower concentration (6%) of permeable cryoprotectant is more favorable to 291 292 sperm during cryopreservation process [12,29,35]. In our study, it has been observed that mean fertility rates [56.4% (control), 66.8% (6% DMA)] were higher compared to previous 293 studies in ducks [35] and turkeys [54] using same cryoprotectant in different diluents. 294

It is concluded that the cryopreservation (pre-freeze steps and freezing-thawing) process affects the quality of red jungle fowl sperm. Moreover, 6% DMA could be efficiently used as cryoprotectant for the cryopreservation of Indian red jungle fowl sperm. To our knowledge, this is the first report on the use of DMA as cryoprotectant for Indian red jungle fowl sperm.

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	Recovery rate (%)					
Extender	Motility	Plasma membrane	wighility	Acrosome		
	Wounty	Integrity	viability	integrity		
20%Glycerol	$51.8\pm3.1^{c}$	$64.8 \pm 1.6^{c}$	$61.9\pm7.4^{\rm b}$	$62.6 \pm 5.2^{b}$		
4% DMA	$71.2\pm3.0^{\rm a}$	$64.2 \pm 1.5^{c}$	$67.7\pm4.4^{ab}$	$68.0\pm2.7^{ab}$		
6% DMA	$75.0\pm2.8^{\rm a}$	$79.4 \pm 1.9^{\rm a}$	$79.6\pm2.0^a$	$75.3\pm2.4^{a}$		
8% DMA	$62.0\pm2.7^{b}$	$75.0\pm3.8^{ab}$	$71.2\pm4.2^{ab}$	$67.1 \pm 5.9^{ab}$		
10% DMA	$67.9\pm4.3^{ab}$	$69.9\pm4.1^{bc}$	$67.4\pm3.5^{b}$	$67.3\pm5.1^{ab}$		

The values (mean  $\pm$  SE) with different superscript in a column differ significantly (P<0.05). 3

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- 20 Table 2: Fertility and hatchability obtained with frozen-thawed sperm using as cryoprotectant
- 21 glycerol 20% or DMA 6% (n = 80; 10 ejaculates/8 cocks).

## 22

Items	Cryoprotectant	Day after insemination				Mean ± SE	
		2	3	4	5	6	
Number of laid eggs	Glycerol 20%	50	45	47	48	45	45.0 ± 1.4
	DMA 6%	45	47	48	40	45	$47.0\pm0.9$
Number of fertile eggs	Glycerol 20%	30	32	34	36	28	$25.4 \pm 1.1^{b}$
	DMA 6%	27	22	24	28	26	$32.0 \pm 1.4^{a}$
Fertility (%)	Glycerol 20%	60.0	46.8	50.0	70.0	57.8	$56.9 \pm 4.1^{b}$
	DMA 6%	60.0	71.1	72.3	75.0	62.2	$68.1 \pm 3.0^{a}$
Number of hatched	Glycerol 20%	22	18	20	20	20	$20.0 \pm 0.6^{b}$
chicks	DMA 6%	28	30	28	30	25	$28.2\pm0.9^{\rm a}$
Hatch (%)	Glycerol 20%	48.9	38.3	41.7	50.0	44.4	$44.7 \pm 2.2^{b}$
	DMA 6%	56.0	66.7	59.6	62.5	60.1	$60.1 \pm 2.1^{a}$
Hatchability of fertile	Glycerol 20%	93.3	93.8	82.4	83.3	89.3	$81.5 \pm 2.2^{b}$
eggs (%)	DMA 6%	81.5	81.8	83.3	71.4	76.9	$88.4 \pm 2.4^{\rm a}$

Different letters (a,b) between diluents, for each item, indicate significant differences 23

(P<0.05). 24

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Figure 1: Effect of Dimethylacetamide (0%, 4%, 6%, 8% and 10%) on motility (a), plasma membrane integrity (b), viability (c) and acrosome integrity (d) of Indian red jungle fowl sperm at different stages of the freezing-thawing process. The results are expressed as mean  $\pm$  SEM, n= 40 ejaculates (5 ejaculates/8 cocks). Different superscripts indicate statistically significant differences (P < 0.05).

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## Highlights

- Glycerol have contraceptive properties and must be replace with alternate cryoprotectant
- DMA was evaluated for cryopreservation of Indian red jungle fowl sperm
- DMA improve the sperm motility, PMI, viability and acrosome integrity
- DMA improve the fertility rate of frozen thawed Indian red jungle fowl semen

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