

Combined Effect of Two Agrochemicals on *Aporrectodea caliginosa* in a Semi-arid Land

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ABSTRACT

Glyphosate and deltamethrin are used worldwide to control pests in agriculture. However, information about their toxic effects on soil fauna is still insufficient. Therefore, we focused on the individual and combined effects of these pesticides, in artificial soil tests on the earthworm species *Aporrectodea caliginosa*. Endpoints were behavior, mortality, growth inhibition and morphology. The insecticide had a significant effect on the behavior. The percentage of migrant earthworms to the control soils increased with the increase of concentrations reaching 75%. At the opposite, 76.19% of earthworms preferred glyphon-treated soils. The insecticide showed toxicity with dose-response relationship, which led to values of $LC_{50-14days} = 2215.71\mu\text{g/kg}$ and $LC_{90-14days} = 51869.24\mu\text{g/kg}$. However, Glyphon caused negligible mortality of *A.caliginosa*. The growth rate was inhibited by the insecticide much more than the herbicide. However, the mixture had a repulsive effect, an antagonistic interaction on the mortality and no effect on the growth rate of *A.caliginosa*. The insecticide altered morphology of exposed earthworms to different concentrations. Symptoms of this alteration ranged from color change of the tegument to lysis of the body wall. While, *A.caliginosa* treated with Glyphon and mixture showed intact bodies. Our data show that Glyphosate and Deltamethrin could be used safely if recommended doses are respected.

Keywords: Décis EC25, Glyphon SL, Behavior, Toxicity, Growth, Morphology

INTRODUCTION

The global pesticides market currently represents 40.475 billion dollars. Europe is the biggest consumer of pesticides in the world (with 31.7% of the market) followed by Asia (23.1%), then Americas (South: 20.8%; North: 20.6%) and Africa (3.8%). Algeria is ranked among the countries that use large quantities of pesticides where 30,000 tons of pesticides are applied each year (Chiali et al., 2013). In our country, with the development of agriculture, pesticides are increasingly used in crops. Thus, more than 400 pesticides are registered in Algeria, of which 40 varieties are more used in agriculture (Bordjiba & Ketif, 2009).

If these pesticides seemed to be beneficial, their harmful secondary effects were gradually highlighted. Pesticides have an impact on non-target soil organisms (Elodie, 2006). Some researchers estimate that only 0.3% of the applied amounts of pesticides reach their target. The remainder quantity affects all other living species with multiple consequences such as weakened immune system, reduced fertility and behavioral changes (Magdelaine, 2013).

The herbicide glyphosate is an effective tool for controlling all kind of weeds. Its global consumption reached 825 804 tons in 2014. Due to its non-selective nature, its agricultural use has long been limited to certain moments of the year in order to avoid damaging crops (Benbrook, 2016). Since 2015, debates around glyphosate illustrate the dependence on it, and underline the resistance to its ban in the agricultural sector (Barili et al., 2017) following its classification as "probable carcinogen" by the international cancer research center. Pyrethroids, synthetic analogues of pyrethrins, are a new range of pesticides with high efficacy and low environmental toxicity (Masoumi, 2009; Grojean, 2002). The impact of these pesticides on non-target invertebrates in agroecosystems is not well known.

Earthworms are among the best-known bioindicators, which have undeniable advantages for the evaluation of soil quality (Jansirani et al., 2012). The current earthworm species for standardized tests is *Eisenia fetida* or *Eisenia andrei*. However, these species are not representative of cultivated fields and less sensitive to pesticides than *A. caliginosa* (Savigny, 1826). This one can be considered as a relevant model test species (Pelosi et al., 2013; Bart et al., 2018). Similarly, Van Capelle et al., (2016) proposed *A. Caliginosa* as a non-target soil organism for the environmental risk assessment of genetically modified plants. Furthermore, a lot of

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contradictions and knowledge gaps highlight the need for further research into long-term earthworm exposure to mixtures of commercial formulations of pesticides (Pelosi et al., 2014).

Thus, the main purpose of the current study was to evaluate the responses of the earthworm species *A. Caliginosa*, in laboratory conditions, to the impact of two pesticides, commonly used in agriculture, which are Décis EC25 (pyrethroid insecticide) and Glyphon SL (glyphosate based herbicide).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Biological material

The earthworms used in this study were collected from Youkous. This site is a water source in North of Tebessa, which is located in the Northeast of Algeria. Thus, we focused an unpolluted area to gather earthworms (Figure 1). Collected earthworms were identified, in laboratory, using the keys of Bouché (1972), Sim & Gerard (1985) and Reynolds (2018). The species used in this study is *A. caliginosa*. This species is dominant in the region of Tebessa (Bouazdia & Habes, 2017). The worms were maintained at $20.29\pm 2.28^{\circ}\text{C}$ for one month before the experiments.

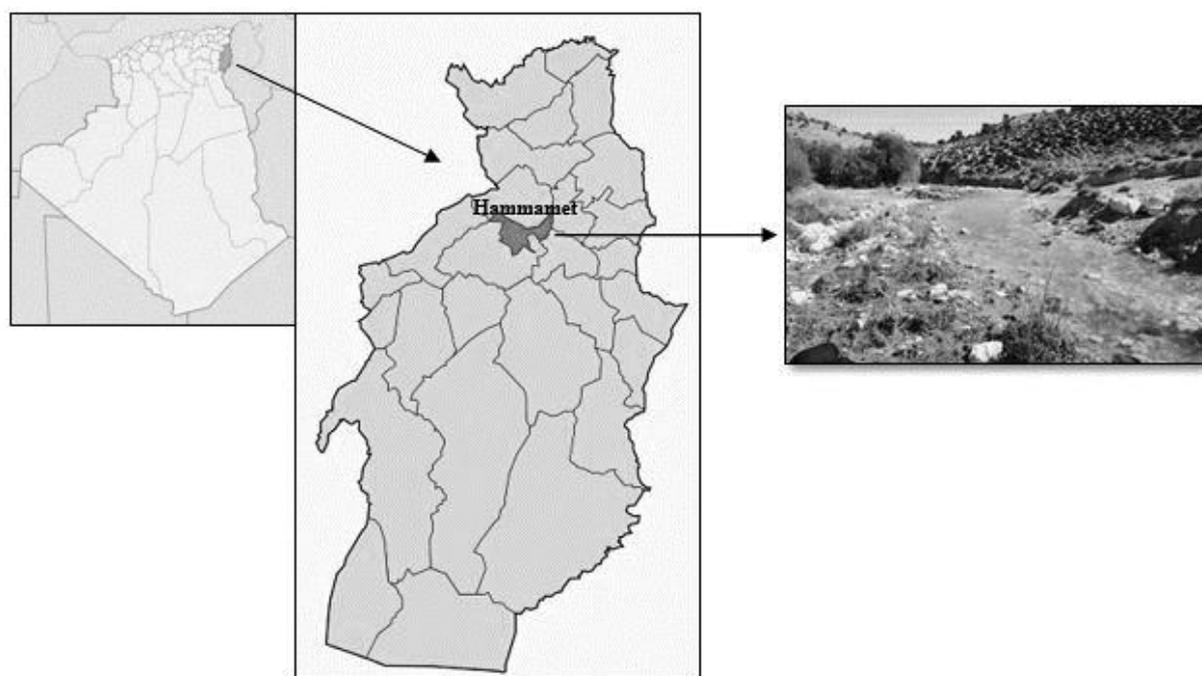


Figure 1. Geographical situation of the collecting site (Youkous-Hammamet) of earthworms.

Test chemicals

The pesticides being tested in these experiments, largely commercialized in Algeria, were an herbicide (Glyphon) and an insecticide (Decis). The stock solutions of each compound were prepared in water on the day of the experiments and were used immediately. Characteristics of the used pesticides are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the herbicide Glyphon and the insecticide Décis.

Pesticides	Herbicide	Insecticide
Name	Glyphon	Décis
Active ingredient	N-phosphonométhyl-glycine	Deltaméthrin
RAD ($\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ dry soil)	480	200

Table 2. Individual and combined concentrations ($\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ soil dry weight) of Decis and Glyphon.

Decis	Glyphon	Mixture (Décis+ Glyphon)
50	120	C1=50+120
100	240	C2=100+240
200	480	C3=200+480
400	960	C4=400+960
500	1920	C5=500+1920

Behavior test

Behavior test was performed in terrariums and adapted for the species *A. caliginosa*. Each terrarium was divided into two equal sections with a vertical plastic separator. Then, we put 335g of control soil in a section and 335g of treated soil, with chosen concentration, in the other section. After removing the separator, 8 adults of *A. caliginosa* were placed in the separation line between the two sections. Terrariums were closed with perforated cover to prevent earthworms from escaping and allow air exchange. At the end of the test, the separator was reintroduced and the number of earthworms per section was counted. Damaged earthworms by the separator are considered belonging to the section where their heads are directed (Loureiro et al., 2005). To validate this test we should have no mortality of the earthworms (HundRinke & Wiechering, 2001).

Acute toxicity assay

Natural soils from particular source are not available all the year, and presence of micropollutants and native organisms can affect the experiment; so it is recommended to use artificial soil. The artificial soil consisted of 10% ground sphagnum peat (<0.5 mm), 20% kaolinite clay (>50% kaolinite), and 70% fine sand. A small amount of calcium carbonate was added to adjust the pH to 6.0 ± 0.5 . The moisture content was adjusted to 35% of the final weight (OECD, 2004).

In the experiment, five concentrations of the pesticides, based on the recommended agriculture dose (RAD), were used (tab.2). For the control treatment, we used distilled water. Four replicates were performed for each concentration.

Mature individuals (with well-developed clitellum) weighting between 0.8 and 1.1 g were stored for 24 hours before use in Petri dishes on damp filter paper (in the dark) to void gut contents. After washing earthworms, ten individuals were introduced into each container and placed in an incubation chamber at a temperature of $20.29 \pm 2.28^\circ\text{C}$ with a 12:12 photoperiod. The moisture content was kept using distilled water. Mortality was counted every week by washing away the artificial soil, and different lethal concentrations were calculated for the tested pesticides. Earthworms were considered as dead when they did not react to a mechanical stimulus.

To assess tested mixture toxicity to earthworms, we opted to include independent-action prediction as follow (Rider et al., 2018):

$$M_{[a+b]} = M_{[a]} + M_{[b]} - (M_{[a]} \times M_{[b]})$$

Where:

$M_{[a+b]}$: is the mortality for the mixture.

$M_{[a]}$: is the mortality for the pesticide a.

$M_{[b]}$: is the mortality for the pesticide b.

Sub-lethal toxicity assay

During 28 days and every week, surviving earthworms were counted after being rinsed and dried. Then, growth rate was determined as the following formula (Martin, 1986):

$$C_n = \ln \frac{P_t}{P_0} \times 100$$

Where:

C_n : is the growth rate for the concentration n.

P_t : is the weight after t days of exposure.

P_0 : is the weight in day 0.

Effect on the morphology

We followed morphological changes of the treated and untreated earthworm's bodies during exposure time. Stereomicroscope was used to confirm some symptoms.

Statistical analysis

LC₅₀ (the concentration that is lethal to 50% of individuals), as following 95% confidence interval, was calculated using the program prism 6.01 (GraphPad software, La JollaCalifornia, USA). Statistical analysis was performed using the Minitab software (Minitab 16.0 for Windows). On the basis that they are used, one-way ANOVA ($p < 0.05$) test for assessing the effects of contaminants on growth. With post hoc, in comparison of means (growth), Tukey (HSD) test was applied. Data are presented as mean \pm standard deviation (SD).

RESULTS

Behavior test

Figure 2 shows the distribution of earthworms at the end of behavior test. The distribution of individuals is equal in the terrariums containing control soil in the two sections. However, in the terrariums containing the control soil in one section and the treated soil with Decis in the other section, the percentage of migrating earthworms to the control soil increased with increasing concentrations reaching a maximum of 71,43%. However, earthworms exposed to the herbicide glyphon showed non-significant avoidance responses at different concentrations; preferring the treated section at the concentration 480 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ where 76.19% of individuals had migrated. In the same way as the insecticide, the mixture had a repulsive effect on the earthworms. This behavior becomes more accentuated with increasing concentration.

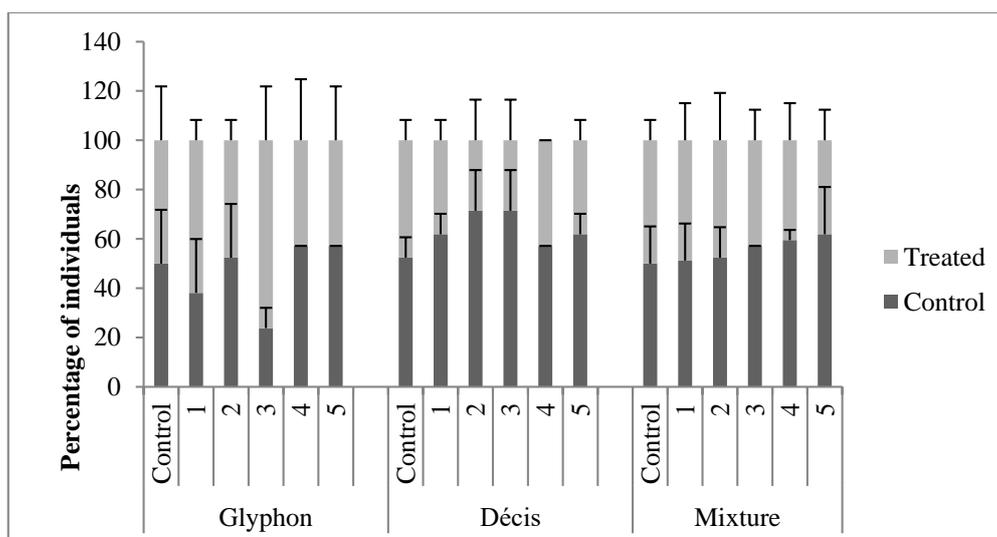


Figure 2. Distribution of adults of *A. caliginosa* between control and treated soil with different concentrations of the pesticides and their mixture. (m \pm SD; n=30).

Toxicity assay

After four weeks of exposure of the earthworms to different concentrations of glyphon and the mixture (glyphon + decis), the results revealed negligible mortality of the tested earthworms. Thus, lethal concentrations (LC₅₀ and LC₉₀) could not be determined.

Whereas, the insecticide Décis caused higher mortality percentage of *A. caliginosa* compared to glyphon and mixture. The results showed that LC₅₀ and LC₉₀ values decreased during exposure time (Table 3; Figure 3) and no mortality recorded in control series. Thereby, the toxicity of Décis displayed a concentration and exposure time-response relationship.

Figure 3 presents the evolution of probits as a function of decimal logarithms of the concentrations.

Table 4 shows the real and predicted mortality under independent-action model for the earthworms exposed to the mixture. It is noted that there is no compatibility between results, suggesting an antagonistic effect between the pesticides.

Table 3. Median lethal concentration values of the insecticide Décis for the earthworm *A. caliginosa* and their confidential limits.

Exposition time (weeks)	LC50 [Lower limit ; Upper limit]	LC50 [Lower limit ; Upper limit]
1	2220,98[867,99;5682,98]	33724,77[13190,07;86296,96]
3	839,42[352,40; 1999,53]	16715,70[7017,41; 39817,32]
4	805,93[340,49; 1907,62]	15862,62[6701,65; 37546,38]

Table 4. Real and predicted mixture mortality under Independent Action (I.A) model.

	Glyphon		Decis		Predicted mixture mortality under I.A model	Real mixture mortality
	Concentration	Mortality	Concentration	Mortality		
7 days	Control	0	Control	0	0,00	0
	1	0,25	1	2,22	1,92	0
	2	0,5	2	10,28	5,64	0
	3	0	3	12,78	12,78	0,75
	4	0	4	17,78	17,78	0,75
	5	0	5	26,11	26,11	1
14 days	Control	0	Control	0	0,00	0
	1	0,75	1	4,72	1,93	0
	2	1	2	13,06	1,00	0
	3	0	3	15,28	15,28	1
	4	0,25	4	20,28	15,46	1
	5	0,25	5	31,11	23,58	1,5

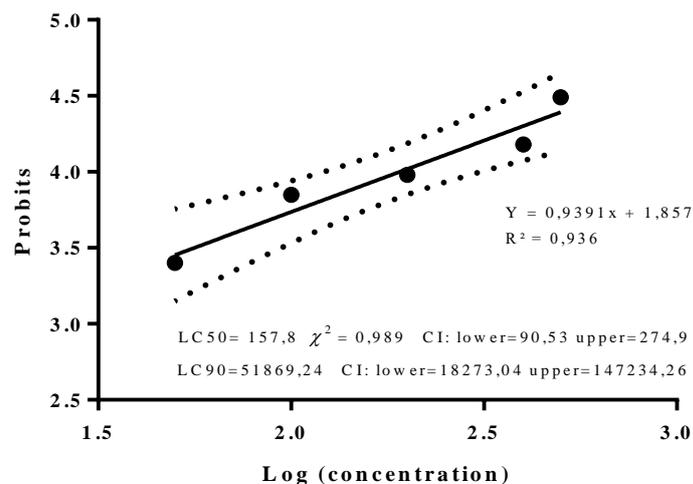


Figure 3. Fourteen days median lethal concentrations ($\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ soil dry weight) of the insecticide Décis : probit Analysis.

Growth inhibition

Significant decrease of the growth rate of earthworms treated with 240, 480 and 1920 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ of the herbicide is noted after the first and the last week compared to the control series (Figure 4A). On the other hand, after the first week, a non-significant decrease of the growth rate is noted in the series treated with the concentrations 50, 100, 400 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ compared to the control. However, the earthworms treated with 200 and 500 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ of the insecticide showed a significantly reduced growth rate. This growth inhibition is observed in all the series after the remaining exposure period (Figure 4B). Conversely, mixture had no effect on the growth rate of earthworms as it is shown in Figure 4C.

Effect on morphology

Morphological alterations such as shrinking, swelling, color change, lysis of the wall and taper appear in different regions of the body of earthworms treated with different concentrations of Decis after 4 weeks of exposure. These anomalies are accentuated with the increase of the concentration (Figure 5). In contrary, earthworms exposed to different concentrations of the herbicide glyphon and mixture showed intact bodies.

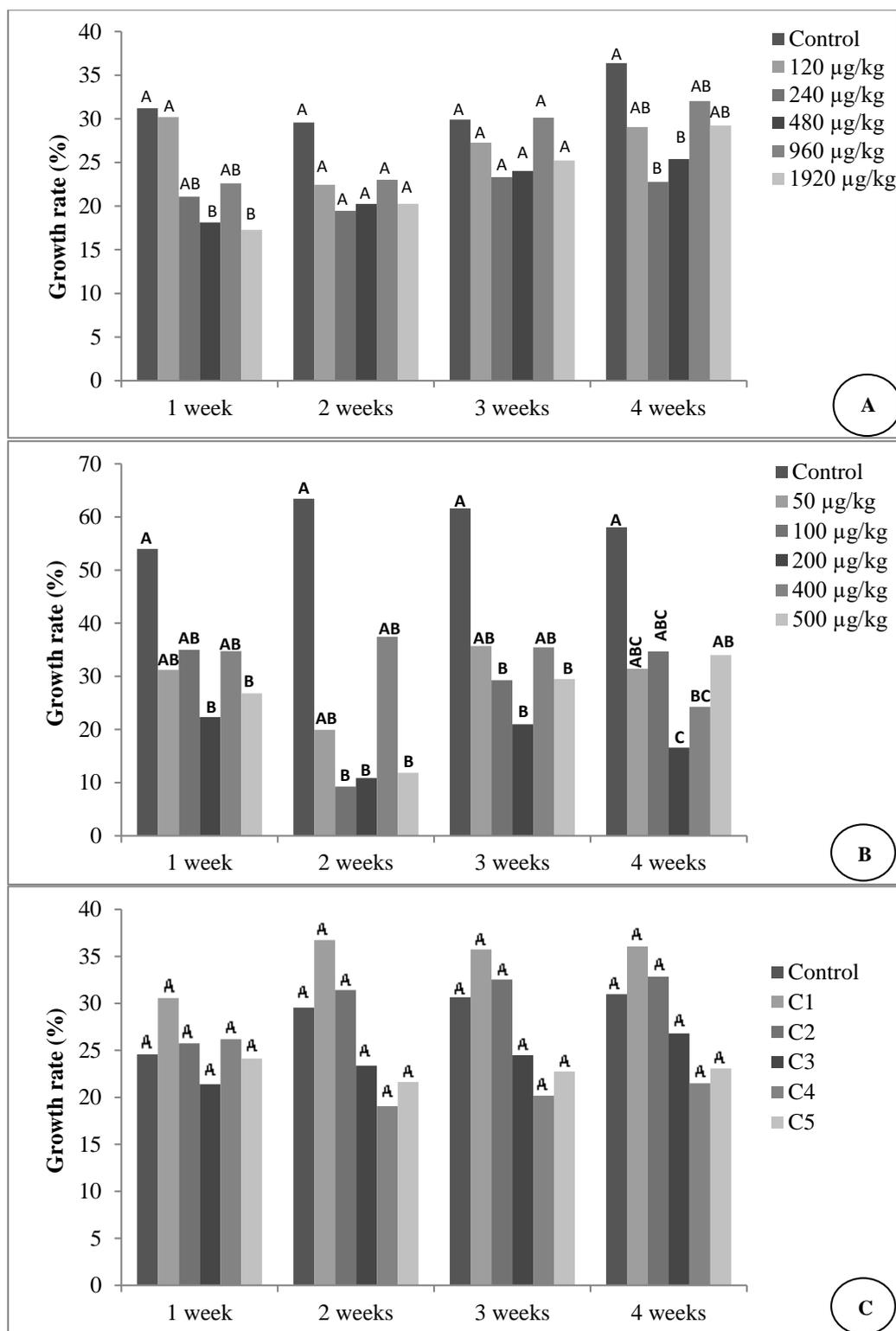


Figure 4. Effect of the pesticides at different concentrations on the weight growth rate of *A. caliginosa* during exposure time: A: Glyphon, B: Décis and C: Mixture. (Different letters indicate significant difference between different concentrations amongst the same period (Tukey's HSD Test)).



Figure 5. Morphological anomalies of the earthworms exposed to the insecticide Décis in artificial soil at different concentrations; A: Control; B: 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$; C : 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$; D : 200 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$; E : 400 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ and F : 500 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$.

DISCUSSION

Effect on Behavior

Avoidance reaction of earthworms to contaminated soils was proposed as the simplest, sensitive, valid and feasible soil toxicity assessment test (Lukkari et al., 2004). Our results revealed that the percentage of earthworms migrating to control soil increased with the increase of the concentration of Décis. In the same way, Lukkari et al., (2004) reported that soil contaminated with discharges of copper-Nickel had evident effect on the avoidance behavior of *Aporrectodea Tuberculata*, *Lumbricus rubellus* and *Dendrobaena octaedra*. At the opposite, in six chambers test the species *E.fetida* was attracted to median and higher concentrations of deltamethrin. This result shows partially that deltamethrin is not dangerous for *E. fetida* (Gherhardt & Bolcu, 2011) which is less sensitive to pesticides than *A. caliginosa* (Pelosi et al., 2013).

Unlike insecticide, the herbicide glyphon had no significant effect on the avoidance behavior of *A. caliginosa*. Similarly, *Eisenia andrei* did not avoid treated soil with high concentrations of glyphosate (Santos et al, 2012). However, Glyphosate induced significant avoidance effect on *Pontoscolex corethrurus* (Buch et al, 2013) *Octolasion cyaneum* (Salvio et al, 2016) and *E.andrei* (Casabé et al, 2007).

Earthworms, having chemoreceptors and sensory tubers, have a high sensitivity to chemicals in soils (Reinecke et al, 2002), However some products may not be detected by earthworms which may die in the soil test without trying to escape (Garcia et al, 2004).

However, mixture had synergistic effect on treated earthworms. Another study found that two mixtures of chlorpyrifos (CPF)+clothianidin (CLO) and heavy metal chromium [Cr(VI)]+CPF+CLO+acetochlor (ACE) exhibited synergistic effects on *E. fetida*. The other two quaternary mixtures of CLO+fenobucarb (FEN)+ACE+Cr(VI) and Cr(VI)+FEN+CPF+ACE at low concentrations also displayed synergistic effects on the earthworms. In contrast, the mixture of Cr(VI)+FEN had the strongest antagonistic effects on *E. fetida*. Besides, the quinquenary mixture of Cr(VI)+FEN+CPF+CLO+ACE also exerted antagonistic effects (Yang et al., 2018).

Toxicity test

Artificial soil test indicated an important mortality of *A. caliginosa* exposed to the insecticide Décis. This mortality depends on the concentration and exposure time. Our results are similar to those of Benetti et al., (2017) where deltamethrin caused high mortality of the earthworms in contaminated soils. Also, Song et al., (2015) found that survival rate of *E. fetida*, exposed to deltamethrin in artificial soil, decreased with the increase of concentration (100-125 mg/kg lead to a maximal mortality of 90%). No survival was found at 602.5 μ g/cm² after 72 hours in filter paper test. In the same way, Singh et al., (2019) have evaluated the toxicity of different concentrations of triazophos, deltamethrin and their mixture (triazophos + deltamethrin) to *Eudrilus eugeniae* in filter paper test. The mortality of earthworms reached 100% at the concentration of 0.0447 μ g/cm². Wang et al., (2012) reported that four types of pyrethroids (cyhalothrin, lambda cyhalothrin, fenprothrin, cypermethrin) were very toxic to *E. fetida*.

Otherwise, many studies showed that the insecticide Deltamethrin had no toxic effect in different species of earthworms. Thus, Blattner et al., (2012) indicated that deltamethrin is not toxic to *E. fetida* with LC₅₀ higher than 1290 mg/kg of dry soil. Zhang et al. (1985) reported that 14 days LC₅₀ was 70.85 mg/kg in earthworms *E. fetida* exposed to deltamethrin. We noticed that CL₅₀ and CL₉₀ values are much higher than concentrations used in toxicity test, which confirm that deltamethrin is not toxic to *A. caliginosa* at the recommended agriculture dose.

The herbicide glyphon had no toxic effect on the earthworms *A. caliginosa*. Similarly, Correia & Moreira, (2010) showed, in many tests, that glyphosate had no mortality effect on *E. fetida*. This herbicide was not toxic to earthworms *Eudrilus Eugeniae* with LC₅₀ of 3578 \pm 14.22 mg of glyphosate/kg dry soil (Kpan et al., 2018).

Few works were dedicated to study the toxic effect of glyphosate amongst terrestrial invertebrates, because this compound is rapidly adsorbed to soil particles and is not biologically available anymore (Bonnard et al, 2019). In fact, Kpan et al, (2018) showed that the weak toxicity of glyphosate toward *Eudrilus Eugeniae* could be explained by the non-affinity of the molecules of this compound to the biological systems of animals.

Combined effect of the tested pesticides on the earthworm's mortality was negligible which concluded to an antagonistic effect. Our results were confirmed by Chen et al., (2018) who noticed an antagonistic effect between the herbicide Tribenuron-methyl and the fungicide Tebuconazole on *Eisenia fetida*. Same effect was reported with Triazophos and Deltamethrin on mortality of *Eudrilus eugeniae* (Singh et al., 2019), with chrome and cadmium on *E. fetida* (Aebeed & Amer, 2018), with 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid (2,4-D) and Glyphosate in *E. fetida* (Lazurick et al., 2017) and with Glyphosate and captan in *A. caliginosa* (Springett & Gray, 1992)

However, Yang et al., (2017) found that the binary, ternary and quaternary mixtures of chlorpyrifos, fenobucarb, clothianidin and acetochlor exhibited a clear synergistic effect on the mortality of *E. fetida*.

The variable sensitivity of earthworms to pollutants may be due to (1) ecological differences of the different species and their food habitats (ecological groups) and (2) specific physiological characteristics of each species (Nahmani et al., 2003).

Effect on growth

Our results revealed that the insecticide Decis induced a decrease of the weight of all exposed earthworms during the study period. Similarly, Shi *et al.*, (2007) had compared the effect of different concentrations of lindane and deltamethrin on the growth of *E.fetida* in artificial soil test during 14 days. Deltamethrin had inhibited the growth rate of earthworms in comparison to control series. Also, Zhang *et al.*, (1985) reported that deltamethrin had toxic effect on development, growth and reproduction of earthworms. Thus, the weight of the treated earthworms decreased along the test time. Many studies had observed the negative effect of pesticides on the growth of earthworms as Cyfluthrine, Carbaryl, Chlorpyrifos, Fipronil and Imidaclopride (Mostert *et al.*, 2007), Buprofezin, Lufenuron and Triflumuron (Badawy *et al.*, 2013).

Depta *et al.* (1999) indicated that one of the potential adaptation strategies of earthworms to pollution is avoidance. The earthworms, placed in polluted soils, would thus be able to differentiate organic matter according to its level of contamination.

On the other hand, glyphon induced significant inhibition of the growth rate of treated earthworms compared to control. Correia and Moreira (2010) reported the same results with the species *E.fetida*. Thus, treated earthworms showed weight loss of about 50%. In the same way, Springett and Gray (1992) confirmed the toxic effect of glyphosate, with concentrations lower than RAD, on the growth of *A.caliginosa*. At the opposite, no effect of glyphosate on the growth of *A.Caliginosa* was reported in artificial soil (Martin, 1982) and in native soil from New Zealand (Doliner, 1991). Therefore, treated *E.fetida* with glyphosate showed no significant difference of the growth rate with control during 28 days (Zhou *et al.*, 2013). Thus, Kpan *et al.*, (2018) have shown no effect of this herbicide on the earthworm biomass. These differences amongst results are perhaps due to the diversity, origin and history of used species.

At the opposite of the individual effect of the pesticides, the mixture of Glyphon and Decis had no effect on the growth rate of *A.caliginosa*. Similarly, Santos *et al.*, (2011) had noticed that the majority of the mixtures of Glyphosate and Dimethoate had effects smaller than the prediction based on the individual responses on the growth of *Eisenia andrei*.

Effect on morphology

Morphological alterations as swelling, shrinking, lysis of the wall, color change, narrowing, fragmentation and taper were observed in earthworms exposed to different concentrations of the insecticide Décis (50, 100, 200, 400 et 500 µg/kg) along 4 weeks. Similarly, *Perionyx excavatus* and *Eisenia andrei* displayed abnormal swelling, secretion of mucous, bleeding and fragmentation when exposed to different xenobiotic as lead acetate, tetra ethyl lead (TEL) and méthyl-tert-butyl éther (MTBE) (Venkateswara *et al.*, 2004, 2003) and Aldrine, Endosulfan, Heptachlor and Lindane (Rajendra *et al.*,1990). Velki & Cimovic (2015) have evaluated the toxicity of a battery of pesticides at different temperatures in *E. fetida* and noticed that lambda-cyhalothrine, imidaclopride, the mixture of chlorpyrifos with cyperméthrine, azoxystrobin, cyproconazole, the mixture of difenoconazole with propiconazole, fluazifop-p-butyl, diquat and tembotrione caused morphological alterations to treated earthworms. In addition, *E.fetida* exposed to phorate suffered of winding, wall disruption, appearance of internal glandular cell mass and disintegration of circular and longitudinal muscles that lead to fragmentation of the body (Kumar & Singh, 2017).

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