

## Resumen

Los insecticidas botánicos son sustancias de origen vegetal con propiedades repelentes y tóxicas contra gran variedad de insectos. Durante siglos constituyeron la única estrategia disponible para el control de plagas hasta que el desarrollo de los insecticidas sintéticos los relegó a un segundo plano. Sin embargo, los problemas provocados por el uso intensivo de los insecticidas sintéticos durante las últimas décadas, ha renovado el interés por los insecticidas botánicos como alternativa para el manejo de plagas.

*Schinus areira* L. (Anacardiaceae) es una especie vegetal con propiedades repelentes e insecticidas. Dicha actividad ha sido comprobada en varias especies de insectos plaga de interés en la sanidad vegetal, animal y humana. Sin embargo, la introducción de nuevos plaguicidas en el mercado, aunque éstos sean de origen natural, requiere no sólo la evaluación de su efectividad como insecticidas sino también el estudio de los efectos adversos que implicaría su utilización sobre el humano y el ambiente.

El objetivo del presente trabajo fue evaluar la toxicidad de los extractos etanólicos y hexánicos de frutos y hojas de *S. areira* utilizando ratones y ratas como modelos experimentales de mamíferos.

Por un lado, se evaluó en ratones la toxicidad de los extractos por vía oral mediante la incorporación de los mismos en el alimento. En primera instancia, se realizaron los estudios por exposición aguda a través de la administración de los extractos en una única dosis de 2000 mg/kg de peso corporal. Los ratones se evaluaron luego de la exposición y a los 14 días de realizada la misma, para detectar la reversibilidad de los efectos o la aparición tardía de los mismos. Se evaluaron la funcionalidad del sistema nervioso central (SNC) a nivel neuromotor, sensorial y autonómico mediante una batería de observaciones funcionales (BOF), y la actividad locomotora mediante observaciones en el open

field (OF). También se llevó a cabo el estudio histopatológico en hígado, riñón, estómago, intestino y cerebro de los animales. En segundo lugar, se realizaron los estudios por exposición repetida del extracto a mediano y largo plazo. En los estudios subagudos se administró una dosis diaria de extracto de 1000 mg/kg de peso corporal durante 28 días, mientras que en los estudios subcrónicos, dicha dosis se administró durante un período de 90 días. Los efectos producidos por los extractos se evaluaron una vez finalizada la exposición mediante una BOF, observaciones en el OF, determinaciones hematológicas y bioquímicas, y estudios histopatológicos de los diversos órganos.

Por otro lado, se evaluó la toxicidad aguda por vía dérmica de los extractos mediante la administración sobre la piel de ratas de una dosis única de 2000 mg/kg de peso corporal durante un período de 24 h. Transcurrido dicho período, se determinaron los efectos locales sobre la piel expuesta a los extractos y los efectos sistémicos a través de una BOF y de observaciones en el OF. Dichas evaluaciones volvieron a realizarse luego de 14 días. Finalmente, se efectuó el estudio histopatológico de los órganos.

Los resultados obtenidos en los diferentes estudios demostraron que ninguno de los extractos de *S. areira* evaluados produjo alteraciones en el crecimiento y desarrollo de los ratones durante las exposiciones a corto, mediano y largo plazo. En particular, el extracto etanólico de frutos sólo provocó un efecto estimulante transitorio del SNC, alteraciones en la fórmula leucocitaria de las hembras, disminución del nivel de colesterol total en las hembras y aumento de dicho parámetro en los machos, y signos leves y transitorios de irritación dérmica. El extracto hexánico de frutos sólo causó un efecto estimulante transitorio del SNC y un aumento leve y temporal de la actividad locomotora. Por otro lado, el extracto etanólico de hojas produjo un efecto diurético leve, aumento transitorio de la cantidad de eritrocitos y alteraciones en otros parámetros eritrocitarios relacionados, disminución del nivel plasmático de glucosa en los machos y generó irritación dérmica leve y reversible. Por su parte,

el extracto hexánico de hojas provocó un efecto diurético leve, alteraciones transitorias de los niveles plasmáticos de glucosa y colesterol total, y signos de irritación leves y reversibles en piel. Ninguno de los extractos causó efectos adversos sobre la funcionalidad hepática y renal, así como tampoco lesiones tisulares en los órganos evaluados.

Los efectos detectados en los animales expuestos a los extractos no pudieron considerarse como deletéreos o adversos ya que no produjeron cambios en la morfología, fisiología, crecimiento y desarrollo del organismo que originaran la pérdida de la funcionalidad o el deterioro de alguna capacidad esencial para su subsistencia. Considerando que dichos efectos, en todos los casos, fueron leves y transitorios, y que las dosis a las cuales podrán ser aplicados como repelentes e insecticidas serán muy inferiores a las evaluadas en los estudios de toxicidad, puede concluirse que los extractos etanólicos y hexánicos de frutos y hojas de *S. areira* son seguros para su utilización en el control de plagas domiciliarias, peri-domiciliarias y agrícolas.

Además, debido a las numerosas propiedades medicinales que se le adjudican a esta especie, los resultados obtenidos en este trabajo también son válidos para inferir que el uso terapéutico de los extractos no provocará toxicidad sobre el organismo.

## Abstract

Botanical insecticides are plant substances with repellent and toxic properties against many insects. Until the development of the synthetic insecticides, they represented the only available strategy for pest control. However, health problems caused by the intensive use of synthetic insecticides in recent decades have renewed the interest for botanical insecticides as an alternative for pest management.

*Schinus areira* L. (Anacardiaceae) is a plant species with repellent and insecticidal properties. This activity has been demonstrated in several species of insect pest with impact in plant, animal and human health. However, the insertion of new pesticides in the market, even if they are of natural origin, not only requires assessing their effectiveness as insecticides but also avoiding possible adverse effects on human and environment that would involve their use.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the toxicity of ethanolic and hexanic extracts of fruits and leaves of *S. areira*, using mice and rats as experimental models in mammals.

The oral toxicity of the extracts was evaluated by incorporating them in the diet of mice. These studies were performed by acute exposure through the administration of the extracts in a single dose of 2000 mg/kg body weight, and mice were evaluated after the exposure. After 14 days, they were tested again to detect the possible reversibility or the delayed onset of the effects. The neuromotor, sensorial and autonomic functionality of the central nervous system (CNS) was assessed through a functional observational battery (FOB), and motor activity was evaluated by observations in an open field (OF). Histopathological studies were also conducted on liver, kidney, stomach, intestine and brain of animals. In addition, the effects of repeated exposure to

the extracts were evaluated at medium and long term. In subacute studies, a daily dose of extract of 1000 mg/kg of body weight was administered during 90 days. The effects of the extracts were evaluated after exposure by a BOF, observations in the OF, hematological and biochemical determinations, and histopathological studies of different organs.

The acute dermal toxicity of the extracts was assessed through the topical exposure of a single dose of 2000 mg/kg body weight on rat skin during 24 h. After this period, local effects on tested skin and systemic effects were evaluated through a FOB and observations in an OF. After 14 days, these tests were assessed again. Finally, the histopathological examinations of the organs were performed.

None of the *S. areira* extracts produced changes in the growth and development of the mice during the short, medium and long term exposures. The ethanolic extract from fruits caused a transient stimulatory effect of the CNS, changes in the differential leukocyte count in the female mice, a decrease of the total cholesterol level in females, an increase of this parameter in male mice, and mild and transient signs of dermal irritation. The hexanic extract from fruits produced a temporary stimulatory effect of the CNS and a slight and transient increase of motor activity. The ethanolic extract from leaves caused a mild diuretic effect, a transiently increased total erythrocyte count accompanied by changes in other related hematological parameters, a decrease of plasma glucose level in males, and generated a mild and temporary dermal irritancy. The hexanic extract from leaves caused a mild diuretic effect, transient variations of plasma levels of glucose and total cholesterol, and slight temporary signs of skin irritation. None of the extracts produced adverse effects on hepatic and renal functionality, nor histologically evident signs of tissue damage in the tested organs.

The effects observed in the animals exposed to the extracts could not be considered as deleterious or adverse as they did not produce changes in the

morphology, physiology, growth or development of the organism that could cause the loss of functionality or the impairment of essential abilities for survival. Their effects in all cases were mild and transient, and the doses in which the extracts may be applied to be used as repellents or insecticides are much lower than those evaluated in the present toxicity studies. Moreover, because of the many medicinal properties that are attributed to this species, the results obtained in this work are also valid to infer that the possible therapeutic use of *S. areira* extracts will cause no toxicity to the body.

In conclusion, the ethanolic and hexanic extracts from fruits and leaves of *Schinus areira* are safe for use to control domiciliary, peri-domiciliary and agricultural pests.

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**Artículos publicados en revistas científicas internacionales**

Las publicaciones derivadas del presente trabajo son:

- Ferrero, A.; Minetti, A.; Bras, C. y Zanetti, N., 2007. “Acute and subacute toxicity evaluation of ethanolic extract from fruits of *Schinus molle* in rats”. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 113: 441-447. Elsevier Ed.
- Bras, C.; Domínguez, S.; Codón, S.; Minetti, A.; Ferrero, A., 2010. “Consequences of subchronic exposure to ethanolic extract from fruits and leaves of *Schinus molle* var. *areira* L. in mice”. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 132: 321-327. Elsevier Ed.
- Bras, C.; Gumilar, F.; Gandini, N.A.; Minetti, A.; Ferrero, A., 2011. “Evaluation of the acute dermal exposure of the ethanolic and hexanic extracts from leaves of *Schinus molle* var. *areira* L. in rats”. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 137: 1450-1456. Elsevier Ed.

**Presentaciones a Congresos, Simposios y Jornadas**

Durante el transcurso de la realización del presente trabajo, se realizaron las siguientes presentaciones en reuniones científicas de carácter nacional e internacional:

- Bras, C.; Minetti, A. y Ferrero, A. “Estudio de neurotoxicidad del extracto hexánico de hojas de *Schinus areira* L. en ratones”. XV Congreso Argentino de Toxicología. Neuquén, Argentina. 26 al 28 de Septiembre de 2007. Trabajo presentado en modalidad póster. Resumen publicado en: *Acta Toxicológica Argentina* 15 (Suplemento): 65.

- Bras, C.; Minetti, A. y Ferrero, A. “Estudio subcrónico del extracto etanólico de frutos de *Schinus areira* L. en ratones”. XXVI Jornadas Interdisciplinarias de Toxicología. Buenos Aires, Argentina. 17 al 19 de Septiembre de 2008. Trabajo presentado en modalidad póster. Resumen publicado en: Acta Toxicológica Argentina 16 (Suplemento): 20.
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