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NON-IMPACT OF VARIOUS LIGHT SPECTRUM COLORS OVER 12 HOURS DAILY ON HATCHING PARAMETERS OF JAPANESE QUAIL.

Zelal Alsaffli¹, Batoul Almer Suliman²

¹Animal Production Department, agriculture college, Hama University, Hama, Syria.

²Animal Production Department, agriculture college, Hama University, Hama, Syria.

✉Email: zelalsaffli@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Study was carried to estimate the effects of different wavelengths of light on hatching potential traits, including egg weight loss, hatch of fertile percentages, embryonic mortality, hatching weight, and chick quality as well as hatch window and hatching time of Japanese quail eggs. A total of 800 hatching Japanese quail eggs were equally divided into four incubation treatment groups: a dark control group, and three treated groups with blue, red, and green LED light, for a 14-day incubation period. The light sourced from LED lamps with the intensity of 200 lux at eggshell level for 12 h d⁻¹ throughout incubation. Results indicated that exposing eggs to different light wavelengths during incubation does not influence the hatchability of fertile eggs, quality, weight and length of chick. In addition, no differences were observed among the treatments in terms of eggs weight loss, hatch window, and hatching time ($p > 0.05$). In conclusion, these results indicate no significant effects on hatchability of fertile eggs, embryo mortality, eggs weight loss, hatch window, and hatching time or day-old chick quality when eggs are exposed to red, green, and blue light.

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Key Words: Hatchability, light LED, incubation, quality, Japanese quail.

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INTRODUCTION

It is known that good productivity rates in a hatchery are directly related to the factors that make up the incubation environment, such as temperature, humidity, egg turning, carbon dioxide concentrations and light (Archer, 2017; Drozdova et al., 2019). Despite literatures highlighting the importance of light during incubation, most commercial hatcheries are still incubating eggs in complete darkness. Light is likely not used in commercial hatcheries because early lighting sources, like incandescent and fluorescent lamps, can harm embryos by generating heat that accelerates development and may lower hatchability (Archer and Mench, 2014b; Archer et al., 2017). The emergence of LED lamp technology has the potential to eliminate this issue, as these energy-efficient lamps are increasingly replacing traditional lighting sources without generating ambient heat (Zhang et al., 2016; Archer et al., 2017).

Data from the literature indicate that bird embryos can respond to light stimuli due to their sensory system, primarily involving the retina and pineal gland, developing early in embryonic growth (Zeman et al., 1962; Reed and Clark, 2011). Erwin et al. (1971) confirmed that respond to light begins on the third day of development in bird embryos. Similarly, other studies have demonstrated that both retinal cells (PIERCE, 1999) and pineal cells (Haldar et al., 2003) are already present in quail embryos from the beginning of embryogenesis. However, the mechanisms through which physiological responses occur are not clearly elucidated.

Exposure to white and red LED lights during eggs incubation enhances chick quality by improving navel maturation (Archer, 2017; Archer et al., 2017), reducing early embryonic mortality, and increasing the number of non-defect chicks compared to dark conditions (Archer et al., 2017; Huth and Archer, 2015). In Japanese quails, Farghly and Mahrose (2012) showed greater hatching weight and lower embryonic mortality of chicks exposed to continuous incandescent light compared to darkness, and observed no difference in activity, appearance, leg conformation and appearance of the birds' navel. These results are related to physiological and metabolic responses to light during embryogenesis, due to the higher rate of embryonic development caused by exposure to light (Farghly and Mahrose, 2012; Archer, 2017).

The photoperiod and the timing of light exposure during incubation are crucial for post-hatch effects (Archer et al., 2009; Özkın et al., 2012; Archer and Mench, 2013; Archer and Mench, 2014a). However, not only the photoperiod, light intensity and wavelength are involved in the perception of light by the embryo, but also characteristics such as the thickness and color of the eggshell (Maurer et al., 2011; 2015).

The exact mechanisms through which light during incubation affects embryonic development and hatchability are unknown, but melatonin may play a role (Drozdova et al., 2019).

Short wavelengths, like monochromatic green light, are linked to the establishment of the circadian rhythm in embryos. Compared to dark conditions,

green light can shorten incubation time, increase hatch weight, and enhance hatchability in broiler chickens (Shafey and Al-Mohsen, 2002).

Studies show improvements in hatchability with the use of monochromatic white, red lights or a combination of both (Archer, 2016; 2017; Archer et al., 2017). Furthermore, these lights also improved chick quality by enhancing navel maturation (Huth and Archer, 2015; Archer, 2016; 2017; Archer et al., 2017), and promoting better post-hatch welfare, leading to reduced fear responses and lower stress susceptibility compared to green light and dark incubation (Archer, 2017).

These findings indicate that using light during egg incubation can yield positive effects. This study aimed to assess the impact of different light spectrum colors for 12 hours per day in artificial incubators on Hatching Parameters of Japanese Quail.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Birds and samples

All experimental procedures adhered to the guidelines of the Local Experimental Animal Care Committee and received approval from the ethics committee of the Department of Animal Production, Faculty of Agriculture, Hama University, Syria. The study involved 800 Japanese quail eggs, which were randomly divided into four experimental groups using four replicate incubators. Eight calibrated single-stage incubators (Victoria Inc., Quaglie I-36 and H-24; Italy) were utilized. Two incubators served as the control group, operating without light (0L24D, Dark), while the other six were

illuminated with green (560 nm), red (650 nm) or blue (480 nm) LED lights for 12 hours at 200 lux throughout the incubation period. Four LED strips were mounted on metal frames on the left side of each incubator.

Incubation protocol

The 2 eggs were incubated at standard temperature 37.8°C and 55% RH, with automatic turning at a 45° angle every two hours from day 2 to day 14. On day 15, viable eggs were set at 37.5 °C and 75% RH, with no turning during the first 3 days.

Hatching Traits

This study measured egg weight loss, embryonic mortality, hatch percentages, and hatch window:

Egg Weight Loss: Before incubation, 50 eggs per replicate were weighed to establish initial weight and re-weighed at 14 days to calculate weight loss (%)

$$\text{Egg weight loss \%} = (\text{initial egg weight} - \text{weight at 14 days}) / \text{initial egg weight} \times 100$$

Hatchability Percentage:

$$\text{Hatchability of all eggs \%} = \{(\text{Number of hatched chicks} / \text{Number of eggs placed in the setter}) \times 100\}.$$

$$\text{Hatchability of fertile \%} = \{(\text{Number of hatched chicks} / \text{Number of fertilized eggs}) \times 100\}.$$

Embryonic Mortality: At 18 d of incubation, all hatched chicks were removed from the hatch basket, and unhatched eggs were examined to diagnose embryo mortality, excluding infertile eggs. Only the number of fertile unhatched eggs was used to calculate the percentages of early

mortality (0-7 days), middle mortality (8-14 days), and late mortality (15-18 days).

Hatch Window, Time of Hatching: From 3658 and 416 hours of incubation, transferred eggs were individually checked every 3 hours, and hatched chicks were recorded to determine the exact hatch window and hatch time in hours.

Weight and Length Chicks: A sample of 80 hatched chicks was weighed at hatch, each chick was weighed on a digital scale with a capacity of 0.5 kg and precision 0.01g. The length of chicks was measured by using caliper vernier (0.01 mm).

Chick Quality: It was assessed using the Paragon® Score system, which evaluates reflex, navel, legs, beak, and yolk, deducting one point for each negative criterion from a total of 10 points (Tona et al., 2003; Kolańczyk, 2020).

Statistical Analysis

Data on hatching traits and chick quality were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA with SAS 9.4 for Windows (SAS Institute Inc., 2011), with significance set at $P \leq 0.05$. Means were compared using Fisher's LSD test based on the model:

$$Y_{ij} = \mu + T_i + e_{ij}$$

(where; Y_{ij} is the observation, μ is the overall mean, T_i is the treatment effect, and e_{ij} is random error).

RESULTS

All treatments showed no significant differences in eggs weight loss, hatchability of fertile eggs, hatch window, or hatching time (Table 1). The embryonic mortality rate was also similar among treatments ($p > 0.05$) (Table 2).

Additionally, body weight, length, and quality of quail at hatch did not differ among treatments ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

The current study's findings were consistent with those of Rozenboim et al. (2013) in turkeys, Shafey (2004) in layers, and Sabuncuoğlu et al. (2018) in Japanese quail. No differences in hatch rates of fertile eggs were observed among various photoperiods when Cobb broiler hatching eggs were exposed to full spectrum fluorescent light (Archer et al., 2009; Archer and Mench, 2014a). Recent studies indicated that exposure to green, white, blue, or red light LEDs for 12 hours did not affect the hatching of fertile eggs in layers (Hannah et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Geng et al., 2021; Özkan et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2023). Similarly, studies on broilers (Tong et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021; Riaz et al., 2024) found no significant differences. Additionally, earlier research confirmed that continuous lighting during incubation, including green (Zhang et al., 2012; 2014; 2016), white (Yameen et al., 2020), or blue light (Zhang et al., 2012), did not have a significant impact on hatch rates of fertile eggs.

As shown in Table 2, exposure of Japanese quail eggs to different spectrums of light did not have any impact on embryos mortality during periods of incubation. This is consistent with previous research in both embryo mortality and hatchability (Archer et al., 2009; Archer and Mench, 2014a; Archer, 2013; Tong et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2023). Riaz et al. (2024) found that exposing eggs to white fluorescent light or a combination of green and red light

for 12 hours daily during incubation didn't affect hatchability, embryo weights, embryonic index, or embryonic death. [Archer \(2018\)](#) suggested that lighted incubation may have a cumulative effect rather than merely improving embryo viability at specific times. Previous literatures indicate that exposure to light during incubation significantly enhances hatchability ([Archer et al., 2017](#); [Abd El Naby et al., 2021](#); [Abdulateef et al., 2021](#); [Rizvi et al., 2021](#)). However, illuminating lighter brown color broiler hatching eggs with high light intensity (1200–2080 lux) negatively affects hatchability and increases embryo mortality, likely due to excessive light penetration through the eggshell ([Shafey et al., 2005](#)).

Light spectrum and strain have a significant impact on the hatching performance. According to [Archer \(2015b\)](#), Cobb 500 broiler eggs had a 3% higher hatchability under white light than red light. While White Leghorn eggs showed a 7% increase in hatchability under red light compared to white light. This variation may result from the different ways broiler and layer eggs filter light, influenced by their shell pigments ([Hernandez and Archer, 2015](#)).

[Hernández et al. \(2012\)](#) found that white light resulted in higher hatchability for Ross broiler eggs compared to red and blue light. Similarly, [Şeremet-Tuğalay and Bayraktar \(2021\)](#) confirmed that continuous green light was more effective than red light in terms of hatchability of fertile eggs in broilers, which may return to higher death in shell (%) and pipping and embryo death (%). Recent study was

conducted by [Safwan et al. \(2023\)](#) found that there were no differences on hatchability of fertile eggs in Japanese quail when exposed to different dichroic lights (Green plus Red, Green plus Blue; and Blue plus Red) for 12 hours of light with 250 lux. However, it was observed that embryonic mortality rates were higher in comparison to dark incubation conditions. It is unclear what the mechanism is behind the improvement in hatchability and embryo mortality.

The differences in hatchability and embryo mortality between previous studies and our current research may result from several factors, including the type of light source, light spectrum composition, bird strain, breeder age, and eggshell characteristics such as thickness and pigment deposition.

The current study found no differences in chicks' weight, length, or quality among groups (Table 3). This agrees with previous research, which indicates that light does not affect chicks' quality or hatching weight ([Zhang et al., 2012](#); [Archer, 2015a](#); [Tong et al., 2018](#); [Wang et al., 2020](#); [Li et al., 2021](#)), and does not influence length in broilers ([Archer, 2015b](#); [Li et al., 2021](#); [2023](#)), or layers ([Zhan et al., 2022](#)). Conversely, some studies suggest that a specific lighting regime during incubation can improve the condition of the navel at hatch. A 12D photoperiod reduced the incidence of unhealed navels and defects in newly hatched chicks compared to those incubated in darkness ([Archer, 2017](#); [2018](#); [Archer et al., 2017](#); [Li et al., 2023](#)). Their findings indicated that photostimulation during incubation may enhance navel

maturity and increase the number of non-defective chicks compared to those incubated in darkness (Archer, 2015a; 2015b; 2017; 2018). However, there was

no significant difference in the quality of newly hatched chick among experimental groups.

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Table 1- Impact of colored photoperiodic light during incubation on hatching traits.

Wavelength	Egg weight	Egg weight loss %	Hatchability of all eggs (%)	Hatchability of fertile eggs (%)	Hatch window (h)	Hatching Time (h)
Dark	11.74 ^{NS}	11.81 ^{NS}	77.5 ^{NS}	86.15 ^{NS}	32.25 ^{NS}	403.75 ^{NS}
Blue	11.62	11.50	80	86.97	30	403
Red	11.55	11.42	78	87.69	29.25	400.75
green	11.52	11.61	81	87.58	28.5	400
SEM	0.11	0.08	5.25	3.31	4.88	7.13
P-value	0.792	0.30	0.156	0.625	0.147	0.203

^{NS}: non-significant differences (p>0.05)

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Table 2-Impact of colored photoperiodic light during incubation on embryonic mortality.

Wavelength	Early dead	Middle Dead	Late dead	Total
Dark	4.43 ^{NS}	3.46 ^{NS}	6.62 ^{NS}	12.5 ^{NS}
Blue	5.44	3.46	4.72	12
Red	4.49	4.09	4.28	11
green	5.38	3.41	4.15	11.5
SEM	2.32	2.44	1.83	3.5
P-value	0.671	0.916	0.081	0.705

^{NS} Non-significant differences (p>0.05)

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Table 3 -Impact of colored photoperiodic light during incubation on body weight, length and quality of quail at hatch.

Wavelength	Weight (g)	length (mm)	Quality (points)
Dark	7.68 ^{NS}	103.13 ^{NS}	8.65 ^{NS}
Blue	7.55	102.51	8.68
Red	7.77	103.30	8.85
green	7.59	102.57	8.95
SEM	0.02	0.80	0.09
P-value	0.09	0.53	0.47

^{NS} Non-significant differences (p>0.05)

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While no significant differences in chick weight or defects were observed in layers, broilers experienced a decrease in body weight under lighted incubation ([Huth and Archer, 2015](#)). [Archer \(2015b\)](#) found that White Leghorn chicks gained significantly more weight under white light than red light, while broilers were unaffected. [Hrabý et al. \(2012\)](#) reported that Ross 308 broiler chicks hatched under white light weighed more (47.17 ± 3.08 g) than those under blue light (42.13 ± 2.07 g).

This confirms that different strains respond uniquely to light, highlighting the need for studies on how bird's embryos react to various light patterns during incubation.

Light exposure during incubation did not impact hatching time or hatch window in this study, consistent with findings in Japanese quail ([Sabuncuoğlu et al., 2017](#)), broilers ([Rozenboim et al., 2004](#); [Özcan et al., 2012](#); [Zhang et al., 2016](#); [Tay et al., 2018](#)), and layers ([Wang et al., 2020](#)). In contrast, earlier studies reported a reduction in hatch time due to light exposure ([Walter and Voitle, 1972](#); [Fahild and Christensen, 2000](#); [Shafey and Al-Mohsen, 2002](#)). According to the findings of ([Hannah et al., 2020](#)), the hatch window may be influenced by the strain, with each strain responding differently to a 12L: 12D photoperiod during incubation under blue LED.

[Cao et al. \(2022\)](#) showed that incubating Yangzhou goose eggs under monochromatic green light for 12 hours reduced hatching time compared to darkness (710.3 vs. 719.5 h, $p < 0.01$) with no effect on hatching window. Moreover, the result of the present study further

suggest that the hatching window of Japanese quail eggs is not synchronized with intermittent light exposure, regardless of the color of the light used.

The current study founded no differences in moisture loss percentages of eggs among the treatments, which is consistent with ([Zhang et al., 2016](#)). However, [Safwan et al. \(2003\)](#) demonstrated that combining red with blue or green light increased egg loss compared to combination of green and blue light or darkness in Japanese quail. This suggested that light heating is not a contributing factor to the results.

The duration of light could potentially serve as a crucial factor influencing moisture loss.

A study by [Yameen et al. \(2020\)](#) found that broilers eggs incubated under continuous white light exhibited greater moisture loss than those under intermittent light for 12 hours daily, likely due to higher eggshell temperatures. On the other hand, [Abd El Naby et al. \(2021\)](#) confirmed that Black Bronze turkey eggs incubated in darkness experienced the greatest total weight loss compared to those incubated under red and blue light. Additionally, light intensity may also impact moisture loss, where dichromatic light (green + red) at 150 and 250 lux was found to increase total weight loss in comparison to 350 lux or dark in Japanese quail ([Ali et al., 2023](#)).

The literature on color lighting programs during poultry incubation reveals significant contradictions. Inconsistent findings likely stem from variations in species, genetic strains, environmental conditions, and research methods. These

discrepancies underscore the need for careful interpretation and additional research.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that exposing Japanese quail eggs to different LED light colors at 200 lux for 12 hours daily during did not significantly affect egg weight loss, hatchability, embryo mortality, hatch window, hatching time or day-old chick quality.

DECLARATIONS

Corresponding author

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Zela Alsaftli; E-mail: zelalsaftli@gmail.com; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7091-5265>

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Authors' contribution

Both authors contributed equally to research work execution, analysing, interpreting the data and manuscript preparation.

Data availability

The datasets used and/or analysed during the current study available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethical considerations

The incubation trials conducted as part of this research were carried out in strict accordance with the ethical guidelines and protocols established by the Research Ethics Committee of the funding agency. The welfare and humane treatment of all animals involved in the trials were of paramount concern, and every effort was made to ensure their well-being throughout the experimental process. Additionally, the collection and handling of data from participating farmers adhered rigorously to the principles outlined in the Data Privacy Act of the Syria. The confidentiality and privacy of farmer related information were strictly maintained, and all data were handled with the utmost sensitivity and in compliance with relevant legal and ethical standards. All methods were performed in accordance with the relevant guidelines and regulations.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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