

A REVIEW: *NERIUM INDICUM* OR *NERIUM OLEANDER* AND ITS TOXICITY IN VERTEBRATES

Krishma Chaudhary*, Veena Batra Kushwaha and Sunil Kumar Srivastav

Department of Zoology, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur.

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*Corresponding Author

Krishma Chaudhary

Department of Zoology,

Deen Dayal Upadhyay

Gorakhpur University,

Gorakhpur.

ABSTRACT

In this review article has been evaluated toxicity of *Nerium indicum* or *Nerium oleander* in the body organs of different animal. In recent year the population of India is in the first place all over the world so the demand of food is increasing also. To cope of food necessity the farmers uses different type of synthetics pesticides and botanical pesticides in agricultural fields. *Nerium indicum* considered to be very toxic due to secondary metabolites present in the plants. It is a great replacement of synthetics pesticides because it's easily availability in nature. *Nerium indicum* could be a great fertilizers if uses brilliantly. The toxicity of *Nerium indicum* plant is mild to severe which causes death to the animals and human being also. It crosses blood-brain barrier and block $\text{Na}^+\text{K}^+\text{ATPases}$ which causes effects on vital organs and muscles of body. Decrease in sperm formation in seminiferous tubules, necrosis, inflammation in kidney, liver, heart, mucus

formation in lungs. Additionally, ROS formation and free radicals, decline in calcium, inorganic phosphate, albumin and increase in bilirubin, creatinine, LDH, Uric acid, urea, SGOT and SGPT.

KEYWORDS: *Nerium indicum*, toxicity, Botanical pesticide, Cardiac glycosides, vertebrate.

INTRODUCTION

Nerium indicum is glycosides bearing toxic plant in which secondary metabolites are present mostly found at the Gangetic region, Himalayan areas of Nepal to Kashmir and Mediterranean countries.^[1,2] *Nerium oleander* grows very fast, planted as highway barriers and roadsides which act as noise silencer and pollution controller.^[3] Cardiac glycosides

inhibit Na⁺K⁺ATPase pump in animals which cause toxic effect in their biological system.^[4,5]

Nerium indicum commonly known as Kaner in Hindi, surkh kaner in Unani, Gauri Pushpa in Ayurveda.^[6] It is a large evergreen flowering shrub. A studies shows *Nerium oleander* contain oleandrin, thevetin A, thevetin B and neriifolin, odoroside, odoroside H, odoroside A, neritaloside, vanderoside, monoglycosidic cardenolides, adynerin, daneric acid, neriucoumaric acid and 12 β -D-hydroxypregna-4,6,16-trien-3,2,20-dione.^[7,8,9]

Accidental consumption of *Nerium* leaves, flowers are very toxic to animals which causes severe damage, sometimes caused death in cow.^[10,11,4,5] A case study showed oleandrin causes effect in heart, brain, kidney and liver of on Guinea pig (*Cavia porcellus*).^[12] *Nerium oleander* shows negative effect in digestive system, blood pressure, cardiac function and causes hyperkalemia, hypoglycemia in dog.^[13,14] A case of death is reported due to hemorrhage and necrosis in kidney, heart, liver and mesentery in a child.^[15] An increase level of inflammatory marker c-reactive protein (CRP) and pro-inflammatory cytokines interleukin-1, interleukin-6 and tumor necrosis factor α (TNF α) in mice.^[16]

Besides their toxicity *Nerium oleander* have antioxidant, anticancerous, antimalarial, anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective and cardioprotective properties^[17,18], antidiabetic.^[1,19,18,20,17] Different studies show anti-anxiety properties of *Nerium oleander* by binding of flavonoids in GABA receptors BZD in brain cell.^[21]

Toxic Properties

Nerium contains several lethal toxins, nerioside and oleandroside, the cardiac glycosides oleandrigenin. It was reported that the toxins of this plant, upon ingestion, shut down the cardiovascular and nervous system, after causing severe nausea and projecting vomiting.

Nerium indicum toxicity in different organs of vertebrates

Toxic effect on fishes

Different studies on *Nerium indicum* shows decline in pyruvate, acetylcholine esterase enzyme, DNA, RNA, protein, alkaline phosphatase and increase in lactate, Aspartate aminotransferase, Alanine aminotransferase, proteases activity, free amino acid in liver and muscle of *Chana punctuata*, *Chana maurilius*, *Colisa fasciatus*.^[22,23,24] In *Heteropneustes fossilis* decrease in nuclear volume, degeneration and necrosis in ultimobranchial gland is

observed after administrated with Nerium leaves.^[25,26] Mortality in zebra fishes (*Brachydanio rerio*) is observed due to severe effect of Nerium leaves.^[27] *Nerium indicum* latex effect the size and number of fishes *Mystus mystus* and *Chhana punctatus*.^[28,29] and declined in level of Acetylcholine esterase and alkaline phosphatases in *Chhana marulius* brain tissue.^[30] In fishes Nerium leaves caused toxic effect, increase in dermal mucus secretion, frequent opening of gill, and loss of body equilibrium.^[22]

Nerium Toxicity in Birds

Researchers noted oleander toxicity caused neurological problems, discontinuous myofibril, RBCs infiltration and pycnotic in cardiac cell and hemorrhage, degeneration in tubules in the kidney of Franconia geese (*Anser anser*)^[31] and *Gallus gallus*.^[3] Omid and his coworkers also observed degeneration in hepatocytes and hemorrhage in liver in broiler chickens.^[3] Behavioural changes like depression, weakness, atrophy and increase in lactate dehydrogenase, troponin I and AST due to Nerium poisoning in *Anser anser domesticus*.^[32]

***Nerium indicum* or oleander toxicity in mammal**

Toxicity in lung: Lung is the one of the organs which is affected by toxicants lesions and damage caused by oxidative stress of cells due to toxic nature of *Nerium oleander*. Oleander poisoning causes effect on bronchioles, lumen widening expansion of alveolar cell and hemorrhage in lung in rat.^[33] Accumulation of mucus hemorrhage blockage and edema in lungs^[34] of mice and pneumonia in rabbit^[35,36], in cow^[4,5] after treatment with *Nerium oleander* leaves. Nerium contains oleandrin, neriin and digitoxigenin causes fatal toxic effect shows diarrhea, anemia and swelling in interstitial and alveolar tissues in lungs and even death in cow.^[37]

Toxic effect on digestive organs

Oral administration of *Nerium oleander* shows degradation and necrosis in gastric glands in rabbit after exposure.^[36] A case study by some researchers shows hemorrhage in abdominal serosa, jejunum and duodenum in goat after oleander consumption with foliage.^[38] Unidentified red nodule like structure is noticed in case of cow treated with Nerium leaves and flower with fodder.^[4] Another report of congestion, hemorrhage, mononuclear cell infiltration of intestine in cows due to N. oleander toxicity.^[37]

Toxicity in kidney

Kidney is a vital organ in a mammal it's have an important role in homeostasis and excretion of waste product outside the body. Most of the pesticides direct effect in kidney function. After exposure with *Nerium oleander* leaves necrosis, inflammation, cell aggregation, hemorrhage in kidney are reported in different animals like mice^[39,40,41,42,34,43,44], rat^[39,33], sheep^[45,2], horse^[46] and goat.^[38,47] Another study in rat exhibits kidney necrosis and changes in fatty acid after treatment of mustard oil extract with root barks.^[48] It has been noted necrosis and lesions in corticomedullary in kidney of horses after oleander administration.^[46]

Toxicity in liver

Nucleus fragmentation in Hepatocytes of liver is noticed by^[49] after rat exposed with *Nerium oleander* leaves. A study shows increase in serum hepcidin, necrosis, over granulation, blood accumulation in hepatic cell, inflammation in hepatocytes is noticed in rats after exposure of *Nerium oleander*.^[50,51,33,52,49,39] *Nerium indicum* leaves shows hepatic necrosis and broadening of sinusoidal spaces due to ROS formation in rat.^[53] Focal degeneration, hemorrhage, hyperplasia in hepatocytes and enlargement of semi sinuses is observed by^[39,34,41,42,43,44,54] and^[55] in liver on mice after administration of *Nerium oleander* leaves and flower. Dermal administration of root barks of oleander shows fatty acid depletion and inflammation in rat.^[48] Another study shows effect of *Nerium oleander* causes hemorrhage, focal degeneration in liver of cow.^[4,37] Other investigators indicated fatty acid accumulation, degeneration the liver of sheep.^[45,2] Toxic damage caused by Inflammation in kupffer's cell, fatal vacuolization in hepatocytes and nucleus are found in periphery of hepatic lobules.^[52] Some researchers noted increased cell damage; hemorrhage causes apoptosis and congestion in liver when high doses of oleander given to mice.^[56]

Toxic effect in heart

Multifocal cardiac necrosis, cardiac degeneration and the condition of picnosis due to imbalance in Na⁺/Ca⁺ ion channel is caused by *Nerium oleander* poisoning in goat.^[38,47] Vacuolization, infiltration of mononuclear cell, swelling in pericardium cardiac muscles of rabbit.^[57,58,35,36] A studies shows coagulation, degeneration and vacuolization in myocytes of mice^[16,41,59,34,43,44] and rat^[20] after exposure of *Nerium oleander* leaves and flower. Increase in mean corpuscular volume, Case studies on Bison (Bovine animal) shows hemorrhage, cardiomyocyte necrosis and focal degeneration in cardiac after administration of *Nerium indicum* with fodder.^[60] Another report of cardiotoxicity sometimes caused edema,

hemorrhage, necrosis, degeneration in myocytes in cow^[4,5,37,10] and horse^[46] are observed due to oleander plants. Nerium exposed dogs showed abnormal heart beat and blockage in atrioventricular.^[13] Electro cardio graph (ECG) studied done by some investigators shows tachyarrhythmia in donkey due to inhibition of Na+K+ pump causes overload of calcium in heart.^[61] Some investigators Yellow oleander or *Thevetia cerebra* seed poisoning observed in patients in Kerala, India shows symptoms like abnormality in ECG due to inhibition in Na+K+ATPase function in body due to cardiac glycosides present in oleander species.^[62]

Effects on brain

An observation conducted by shows negative effect in brain tissues in mice and focal degeneration in rat brain noticed by^[41,34,59] A researcher observed oleander toxicity caused lack of motor impairment in central nervous system in rats and mice due to Nerium block the synaptic transfer by enhancing GABA receptor in CNS.^[61] Some investigators showed degeneration, hyperemia, swelling and degeneration in neurons in brain of cows due to oleander poisoning.^[37] Researcher noted congestion, cluster of cells around hemorrhage and cell proliferation in damaged cell of brain due to Nerium poisoning occur in mice.^[40]

Toxic effect on spleen

Report of spleen enlargement in mice^[55] and necrosis and reduction in splenic follicles in rat is observed after administration of *Nerium oleander* leaves.^[33]

Effect on reproductive organs

Nerium oleander administration exhibits necrosis in seminiferous tubules, block the formation of primary spermatozoa causes reduction in spermatogenesis or germ cells in rat.^[63,48] A study conducted in sheep observed abnormality in sperm structure, function, decrease in sperm count and mobility due to toxic effect of oleander.^[64] In yellow oleander kaempferol and quercetin inhibit fertility by declining progesterone level in female rat.^[65]

Effects on Biochemical parameters

Animal	Plant parts	Effects on blood parameters	References
Charles foster rat	<i>Nerium indicum</i> roots	No any changes are reported in SGOT, bilirubin, creatinine, uric acid, calcium, albumin, globulin but increase in SGPT and cholesterol.	[48]
Wistar rats	<i>Nerium indicum</i> Leaves	Decrease in calcium and phosphate level	[66]
Albino rat	<i>Thevetia</i>	Induced in serum urea and creatinine level	[67]

	<i>peruviana</i> (seeds)	but no alteration in bilirubin	
Sheep	<i>Nerium oleander</i> Leaves	Increase in bilirubin, urea, lactate dehydrogenase and decrease in albumin level	[45]
Albino rat	<i>Nerium oleander</i> Leaves	Increase in liver enzymes ALP, AST and decrease in albumin	[49,68]
Mice	<i>Nerium oleander</i>	Induce in enzymes Alanine transaminase, urea, aspartate transaminase and creatinine	[54]
Cow	<i>Nerium oleander</i> leaves	Creatinine, urea, alkaline phosphatase, lactate dehydrogenase, total protein level is increased and diminished in calcium level	[10]
Sheep	<i>Nerium oleander</i> leaves	Induced liver enzymes AST, ALT and increase in Urea, Uric acid, Creatinine, bilirubin, triglyceride, glucose due to enormous release of catecholamins by autonomous nervous system	[2]
Rats	<i>Thevetia Peruviana</i> seeds	<i>Thevetia peruviana</i> seeds in rats exhibit decrease in creatinine, no changes in ALP, SGPT, SGOT and Bilirubin	[69]
Wistar rats	<i>Nerium oleander</i> leaves	Increase in monocyte, eosinophils, neutrophils is noted due to immune response	[53]
<i>Heteropneustes fossilis</i>	<i>Nerium indicum</i> Leaves	Decline in calcium and inorganic phosphate	[25,26]
Rabbit	<i>Nerium indicum</i> Leaves	Decrease in albumin, protein and increase in blood urea and creatinine	[70]
Mice	<i>Nerium indicum</i> Leaves	Increase in Aspartate aminotransferase, Alkaline phosphatase and Alanine aminotransferase	[2]
Mice (<i>Musmusculus</i>)	<i>Nerium oleander</i> leaves	Decline in red blood cells, hemoglobin and increase in platelets	[71]
Rabbit	<i>Nerium oleander</i> leaves	reduction in calcium and decrease in K ⁺ , ALP, ALT and AST	[72]
Donkey	<i>Nerium oleander</i>	increase level of serum creatinine, Alkaline phosphatase, Aspartate amino transferase	[61]

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