

1 **Title:** Integrated effects of thermal acclimation and challenge temperature on cellular immunity
2 in the plusiine moth larvae *Chrysodeixis eriosoma* (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)

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5 **Running Heads:** Temperature on cellular immunity

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37 **Abstract.** Temperature is one of the most influential factors for animals. The acclimation
38 (rearing) and challenge temperatures are often more important than the given temperature per
39 se. These effects on physiological responses has been known, but not well understood on
40 immune responses. Here, we investigated the integrated effects of rearing and challenge
41 temperatures on hemocyte populations in larvae of a plusiine moth, *Chrysodeixis eriosoma*. We
42 hypothesize that the hemocyte concentration is decreased (increased) at higher (lower)
43 temperatures from rearing temperatures and that the proportions of hemocyte types exhibit
44 directional changes at higher (lower) temperatures to compensate for immune reactions. We
45 expect that increasing (decreasing) the challenge temperature from the rearing temperature
46 enhances (reduces) phagocytic activity. We found that higher temperatures slightly decreased
47 the hemocyte concentration. We detected small changes in the proportions of hemocyte types
48 among rearing temperatures, but the changes were non-directional and most of them were
49 statistically insignificant. We also found the integrated effects only with increases in the
50 challenge temperatures, which resulted in increased phagocytosis, whereas no apparent
51 reactions were detected with decreases in the challenge temperatures. Our results show that the
52 hemocyte concentration is significantly affected by the rearing temperature, which implies that
53 hematopoiesis depends on the ambient temperature. We discuss some adaptive and non-adaptive
54 components for the positive integrated effects of increases in the challenge temperatures. We
55 also discussed the obtained non-responsiveness in the integrated effects with decreases in the
56 challenge temperatures.

57

58 **Keywords.** Innate immunity, temperature, hemocyte, Lepidoptera, *Chrysodeixis eriosoma*

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67 **Introduction**

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69 The ambient temperature generally affects ectotherms (e.g., reptiles, fishes, amphibians,
70 molluscs and insects) more than endotherms (e.g., humans, other mammals and avians)
71 (Angilletta, 2009; Martin et al., 2010). In particular, small terrestrial ectotherms (e.g., worms
72 and insects) are closely affected by the ambient temperature (Stevenson, 1985; Deutsch et al.,
73 2008; Paaijmans et al., 2013).

74

75 In insects, the ambient temperature not only affects physiological responses and metabolic
76 profiles but also profoundly affects the overall resistance of the hosts to pathogens (Blanford
77 and Thomas, 1999; Inglis et al., 1996) and parasitoids (Adamo, 1998; Geden, 1997; Hance et
78 al., 2007). The insect immune system comprises humoral and cellular defence responses
79 (Beckage, 2008): the humoral immune response is based on the products of immune genes, such
80 as antimicrobial peptides and the prophenoloxidase (PO)-activating system, and the cellular
81 immune response is performed by hemocytes that exhibit phagocytosis, nodule formation and
82 encapsulation. In lepidopteran larvae, five types of hemocytes have been discovered:
83 prohemocytes, granulocytes, plasmatocytes, spherulocytes and oenocytoids (Wigglesworth,
84 1972). Oenocytoids synthesize prophenoloxidase, and granulocytes and plasmatocytes exhibit
85 phagocytosis, nodule formation and encapsulation (Lavine & Strand, 2002; Jiang et al., 2010).
86 The cellular immune system is affected by the ambient temperature. For example, in
87 *Protopulvinaria pyriformis*, the encapsulation of parasitoid eggs is correlated with temperature
88 (Blumberg, 1991), but in *Anopheles stephensi*, phagocytic activity does not simply scale with
89 temperature (Murdock et al., 2012).

90

91 The effects of temperature on physiological events appear to be very complex, and past and
92 current temperatures exert separate as well as integrated effects (Huey et al., 1999; Angilletta,
93 2009). The thermal history (i.e., acclimatization and hardening) also influences various
94 phenotypic responses, such as the oxygen consumption rate, locomotor performance, sweat
95 gland functions, and seasonal morph production, in endothermal and ectothermal organisms
96 (Parsons, 2001; Prudic et al., 2011; Sato et al., 1990; Brakefield et al., 1998; Sgro et al., 2016;
97 Demas & Carlton, 2015). However, in most experiments investigating the effects of the
98 challenge temperature, the effects of a high or low temperature were the main objective, and the
99 effects of increasing/decreasing the challenge temperature compared with the rearing
100 temperatures are not considered.

101

102 In insects, the acclimation temperature is also an important factor, and a shift in temperature is

103 often more important than the given temperature per se. That is, the activity level at a given
104 temperature depends on the temperature at which the organism was maintained during the
105 previous period. This effect has well been described with respect to physiological responses
106 such as locomotion activity and oxygen uptake (Cossins & Bowler, 1987; Wigglesworth, 1972).
107 The immune functions of insects could also be affected by both the current temperature and the
108 previous temperature (thermal acclimation) (Angilletta, 2009; Blumberg, 1991; Catalan et al.,
109 2012; Triggs & Knell, 2012; Ferguson et al., 2016; Murdock et al., 2012). In butterflies, a higher
110 rearing temperature during the larval stage (i.e., green-veined white butterfly *Pieris napi*) or
111 heat treatment after adult emergence (i.e., mycalesine butterfly *Bicyclus anynana*) decrease the
112 hemocyte numbers at the adult stage (Bauerfeind & Fischer, 2014; Karl et al., 2011). In the deer
113 fly *Lipoptena cervi*, the early life temperature modifies adult immunity, and 3 days of exposure
114 to low temperatures during pupal diapause exerts a favourable effect on the encapsulation
115 activity of adults that emerge 3 months after treatment (Kaunisto et al., 2015). However, the
116 combined effects of these temperatures, such as the effect of the acclimation temperature on
117 immune responses, are poorly understood.

118

119 The previous studies imply the following immunological reaction in thermal changes (Cossins
120 and Bowler, 1987). During acclimation, organisms should adapt to get the best metabolism at
121 acclimation temperature by compensation of energy metabolism. The physiological
122 performance of the higher temperature acclimated organisms should be depressed at lower
123 temperatures more than those expected for non-acclimated ones. Conversely, the opposite
124 should occur at higher temperatures in lower temperature acclimated organisms. Therefore, we
125 propose the following two hypotheses: (1) increasing the challenge temperature from the
126 previous (rearing) temperature enhances phagocytic activity; and (2) decreasing the challenge
127 temperature from the previous temperature reduces phagocytic activity. Here, we examined the
128 combined effects of the challenge immune temperature and thermal acclimation (rearing
129 temperature) on the cellular immune function of lepidopteran larvae (pluine moth,
130 *Chrysodeixis eriosoma*). For that purpose, the hemocyte concentrations (total number of
131 hemocytes), differential hemocyte counts and phagocytic activities at different temperatures
132 were examined.

133

134 **Materials and Methods**

135

136 *Insects*

137

138 A laboratory stock (ca. 20-40 adults at the adult stage) of *Chrysodeixis eriosoma* (Lepidoptera,

139 Noctuidae) three to four generations after field collections was used for the experiments. The
140 stock originated from adults and larvae collected on August and September 2014 in Tokyo,
141 Japan. The adults and larvae were maintained at 25°C under a 16 L:8 D photoperiodic regime
142 according to the method described by Nishikawa et al. (2013). The adults were fed a 10% sugar
143 solution. The eggs were collected daily, and the larvae were reared on an artificial diet
144 (Kawasaki et al., 1987). For each test, larvae were randomly selected from the laboratory stock.
145 For the acclimation experiments, *C. eriosoma* eggs collected from the stock (which originated
146 from various females) were randomly assigned to one of five temperature regimes (18, 20, 25,
147 30, and 32°C) on the first day after oviposition and reared individually at these temperatures.

148

149 *Hemocyte concentration and differential hemocyte counts*

150

151 Hemolymph was collected by piercing the second proleg of the host larvae with a microneedle
152 on day 3 of the 6th (final) instar. The hemolymph was bled onto parafilm placed on ice and then
153 transferred to a Thoma hemocytometer. The hemocytes were counted under a light microscope,
154 and the hemocyte concentration is expressed as the number of cells per mm³ of hemolymph. To
155 obtain the differential hemocyte counts (DHCs), the hemolymph was directly bled onto a glass
156 slide and stained with a mixed solution of brilliant cresyl blue/Sudan III (Kurihara et al., 1992).
157 Similar to the results obtained with most other lepidopteran insects, the hemocytes of *C.*
158 *eriosoma* larvae consist of a complex (combination) of five types of mesodermal cells:
159 granulocytes, plasmatocytes, oenocytoids, spherulocytes and prohemocytes (Nishikawa, et al.,
160 2013). From each sample, 100 hemocytes were identified under a phase-contrast microscope.

161

162 *Hemocyte response to foreign objects*

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164 Polystyrene microbeads (Polybead® Polystyrene Dyed Red 10 Micron Microspheres –
165 Polysciences Inc.) suspended in phosphate buffered saline (PBS) (9.78 M K₂HPO₄, 7.44 M
166 KH₂PO₄, and 0.44% glucose, pH 6.8) were used as the foreign objects. First, 50 µl of PBS with
167 microbeads (1.0 × 10⁶ beads/ml) was injected into the proleg of 3-day-old 6th-instar larvae that
168 were reared at various temperatures (18, 20, 25, 30, and 32°C) using a hand-pulled 10-µl
169 Drummond microdispenser (Drummond Scientific, Broomall, PA, USA). Immediately after
170 immune challenge by bead injection, the larvae were transferred to different temperature
171 conditions (18, 20, 25, 30, and 32°C). Preliminary experiments showed that phagocytosis started
172 at 30 min and stopped within 2 hours after injection. Therefore, at 2 hours post-immune
173 challenge, hemolymph was dropped into physiological saline, and the number of completely
174 phagocytosed and non-phagocytosed beads was counted under a phase-contrast microscope

175 until a total of 50 beads were counted.

176

177 *Statistical analysis*

178

179 The statistical analyses of the data were conducted using the Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's
180 multiple comparison test.

181

182

183 **Results**

184 We first examined the effects of the rearing temperature (during embryonic and postembryonic
185 development) on the number of hemocytes. The rearing temperature markedly affected the
186 hemocyte concentration (number of hemocytes per ml) of the 6th-instar *C. eriosoma* larvae
187 (Fig. 1A, Table S1). The hemocyte concentrations obtained with rearing temperatures of 18°C,
188 20°C and 25°C were significantly different from those obtained with rearing temperatures of
189 30°C and 32°C (Table S6). The highest concentration of hemocytes was found in the larvae
190 reared at the lower temperatures, particularly at 18°C, and the hemocyte concentration
191 decreased with increases in the rearing temperatures until half of the highest concentration was
192 obtained with the highest rearing temperature (32°C). The analysis of the DHCs revealed that
193 the rearing temperature did not affect the counts of all hemocyte types except oenocytoids (Fig.
194 1B, Table S2), and significant but non-directional differences in the oenocytoid counts were
195 detected (Table S6).

196

197 We then examined the integrated effects of several combinations of rearing temperatures and
198 immune challenge temperatures on phagocytic activities. The phagocytic activity was tested by
199 microbead injection into final-instar *C. eriosoma* larvae. We first measured the effects of the
200 rearing temperature alone on phagocytosis by maintaining the challenge temperature identical to
201 the rearing temperature (Fig. 2A, Tables S3, S7). The effects of the rearing temperatures were as
202 follows. At moderate and high rearing temperatures (20 to 32°C), approximately 50% of the
203 microbeads were phagocytosed, indicating no difference in phagocytic activity. In contrast, a
204 rearing temperature of 18°C decreased the percentage phagocytosis to only 23% (Fig. 2A). We
205 then set the rearing temperature to 25°C and tested the effects of the challenge temperature (Fig.
206 2B, Tables S4, S7). The results showed that the percentage of phagocytosed microbeads was
207 higher at high temperatures (30 and 32°C) than at moderate and lower temperatures (18, 20 and
208 25°C) (Fig. 2B). Significant differences in phagocytic activity were not observed among the
209 various temperature groups (30-32 and 18-25°C). Thus, phagocytosis increased with increases
210 in the challenge temperatures (30 and 32°C), whereas no significant changes (increase or

211 decrease) were detected with a lower and unchanged challenge temperature (challenge
212 temperature of 18-25°C and rearing temperature of 25°C). We subsequently tested the effects of
213 thermal acclimation ('past' rearing temperature) on immune function by maintaining the
214 immune challenge temperature at 25°C (Fig. 2C, Tables S5, S7). The percentage of
215 phagocytosis at 18°C and 20°C was higher than 50%, whereas slightly decreased phagocytosis
216 was obtained with a challenge temperature of 25-32°C (Fig. 2C). These results indicated that
217 insects that were transferred from lower rearing temperatures after bead injection (18 and 20°C)
218 exhibited higher phagocytic activity than those that were reared at moderate and higher
219 temperatures (25 to 32°C) (Fig. 2C). However, significant differences in phagocytic activity
220 were not found between the two temperature groups (18-20 and 25-32°C) (Table S7).

221

222 Based on these results, we found that the hemocytes of larvae that were transferred from their
223 rearing temperature to a higher immune challenge temperature exhibited enhanced phagocytic
224 activity. Unexpectedly, however, no enhancement in phagocytic activity was observed with the
225 larvae transferred from their rearing temperature to the same or a lower immune challenge
226 temperature (Fig. 3).

227

228 **Discussion**

229

230 Immunological activity represents a type of animal performance and is also affected by the
231 ambient temperature (Mondal & Rai, 2001; Hung et al., 1997). In general, each animal species
232 has an optimal temperature at which their performance level is maintained (Cossines & Bowler,
233 1987). The effect of temperature on cellular immune function is observed at the cellular level,
234 and it is expected that the most effective cellular immune responses occur at the optimal
235 temperature (Mondal & Rai, 2001). The current results indicate that the optimal temperature
236 range for *C. eriosoma* larvae is 20-32°C because rearing difficulties are observed at temperature
237 higher than 32°C.

238

239 The rearing temperature affects the hemocyte concentration of lepidopteran larvae (pluine
240 moth, *Chrysodeixis eriosoma*). As might be expected, the hemocyte concentration obtained at
241 higher temperatures (30 and 32°C) was lower than that obtained with lower temperatures (18,
242 20 and 25°C) (Fig. 1A). This result is consistent with previous studies (Bauerfeind & Fischer,
243 2014; Karl et al., 2011), and increased hemocyte concentrations at low temperatures might be
244 commonly found in lepidopteran insects. In contrast, unexpectedly, the rearing temperature had
245 no effect on the DHCs (proportions of hemocyte types) (Fig. 1B). Thus, the hematopoiesis
246 activity of *C. eriosoma* might be regulated by temperature, probably due to long-term thermal

247 acclimation during embryonic and postembryonic development, without changes in the
248 proportion of hemocyte types. In humans, hyperthermia increases the number of hematopoietic
249 stem cells (Capitano et al., 2012), and the mechanism of increased hematopoiesis activity at
250 lower temperatures has not been studied in insects. The current results (increased hemocyte
251 concentration at lower temperatures) might imply that hematopoiesis is increased at lower
252 temperatures in this insect species (Fig. 1A). The present study also showed that the phagocytic
253 activity of *C. eriosoma* was retained under various temperatures higher than 20°C but was
254 greatly decreased at the lower temperature of 18°C (Fig. 2A). The cellular immune response
255 was markedly affected by past-experienced temperatures. The phagocytic activity of larvae
256 reared at 25°C was greatly increased by transferring the larvae to higher temperatures (30 and
257 32°C) after immune challenge (Fig. 2B). Enhancements in function in response to a
258 temperature increase should be beneficial for maintaining resistance against parasitoids.
259 Successful parasitization is lower at higher temperatures because the eggs and larvae of
260 parasitoids are more often killed by encapsulation (Thomas & Blanford, 2003; Fellowes et al.,
261 1999; Hance et al., 2007). Moreover, the encapsulation ability of hemocytes might compensate
262 for the disadvantage of the lower concentration of hemocytes in larvae that develop at higher
263 temperatures (Fig. 1). In addition, the increased hemocyte concentration observed with the low
264 temperature of 18°C might represent adaptive compensation to the decreased immune activity
265 observed at lower temperatures. Increased immunity induced by exposure to cold temperatures
266 is thought to be an adaptive response to cold-associated pathogen stress (Sinclair et al., 2013).
267 Notably, no obvious change in phagocytic activity was observed in the larvae transferred to
268 lower temperatures (18 and 20°C). Thus, the phagocytic activity might be stable at lower
269 temperatures and at a decreased temperature. In contrast, the analysis of larvae reared at
270 different temperatures and transferred to 25°C after immune challenge revealed that the
271 phagocytic activity was markedly increased in the larvae reared at 18 and 20°C (Fig. 2C). In this
272 case, no noticeable change was observed in the larvae transferred from higher temperatures (30
273 and 32°C). Additionally, in this experiment, stable phagocytic activity was found at challenge
274 temperatures lower than the rearing temperatures. Thus, our hypothesis that a challenge
275 temperature higher than the previous (rearing) temperature enhances phagocytic activity was
276 thus confirmed. However, unexpectedly, a challenge temperature (25°C) lower than the previous
277 (rearing) temperature (30 and 32°C) does not decrease the phagocytic activity.

278

279 This study implies that thermal acclimation might increase the basal level of immune activity at
280 temperatures that are higher than the previous temperatures. In general, the behavioral activity
281 of insects is increased by increasing temperature, in which the increased behavioral activity is
282 mediated by the elevation of neuronal activity and is dependent on the rate of increase of

283 temperature (Morrissey and Edwards, 1979; Abrams and Pearson, 1982; Inan et al., 2011). The
284 increase in hemocyte function observed in response to increasing temperatures is thought to be
285 an adaptive response to natural enemies such as parasitoids whose performance is supposed to
286 be increased with increasing temperatures. However, the effect of increase in temperature on
287 parasitoid performance is not known (Thomas & Blanford, 2003; Hance et al., 2007). In
288 addition, acute elevation of temperature increases the resistance of insects to pathogens,
289 probably due to immune-neural connection, although whether the increase in temperature, but
290 not high temperature, is indeed effective or not remains unknown (Moore, 2002). Therefore,
291 whether the acclimation responses of the phagocytic activity of lepidopteran larvae actually
292 enhance the fitness or are merely unavoidable consequences of temperature changes remains to
293 be determined.

294

295 We identified the effect of increasing immune challenge temperatures on the immune responses
296 (Fig. 3). This finding supported our proposed hypothesis regarding increasing temperatures.
297 However, decreases in temperatures exerted no noticeable changes in the immune responses.
298 This finding rejects the second proposed hypothesis regarding decreases in temperature. The
299 lack of effect observed with decreasing temperature is a very interesting question from the
300 physiological (functional, mechanistic) and adaptive perspectives. Although we currently have
301 no related information, we suspect that it might be more prevalent in endotherms in which
302 thermal homeostasis is important (Cossins and Bowler, 1987). As might be expected, an
303 immune challenge temperature higher than the acclimation temperature induces an increase in
304 phagocytic activity. Thus, the phagocytic activity of *C. eriosoma* larvae is enhanced by an
305 increase in temperature but not by a high temperature per se (Figs. 2B, 2C and 3). At the cellular
306 level, temperature increase would positively affect the metabolism rate (Schulte, 2015).
307 However, further studies are needed to elucidate the molecular mechanism and the ecological
308 significance of the enhancement in immune activity caused by an increase in temperature.
309 Furthermore, whether this phenomenon is commonly involved in the immune system of
310 ectotherms and endotherms and whether the effect is observed in both the innate and acquired
311 immune systems remain to be resolved. In general, functionally transient receptor potential
312 (TRP) channels are crucial for sensing the rate of temperature increase (Kwon et al., 2008; Luo
313 et al., 2017). TRP channels in vertebrates and invertebrates are distributed in neurons as well as
314 immunocytes (Dhaka et al., 2006; Saito & Tominaga, 2015; Wei et al., 2015; Kashio et al.,
315 2012). TRP channels might explain the mechanisms underlying these integrated effects of
316 temperatures on cellular immunity.

317

318 **Supporting Information**

319 Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information
320 section at the end of the article.

321

322 **Table S1.** Hemocyte concentration of the last instar larva reared at various temperatures.
323 (related to Fig. 1A)

324 **Table S2.** Differential hemocyte counts of the last instar larva reared at various temperatures.
325 (related to Fig. 1B)

326 **Table S3.** Effect of temperature through the entire period on phagocytic activity.
327 (related Fig. 2A)

328 **Table S4.** Effect of temperature at immune challenge on phagocytic activity. (related
329 Fig. 2B)

330 **Table S5.** Effect of rearing temperature on phagocytic activity. (related Fig. 2C)

331 **Table S6.** Statistical Inferences for Figure 1. Statistical test using Kruskal-Wallis test
332 with Dunn's multiple comparison test for hemocyte number or ratio.

333 **Table S7.** Statistical Inferences for Figure 2. Statistical test using Kruskal-Wallis test
334 with Dunn's multiple comparison test for phagocytic rate.

335

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337

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341

342 **Authors' contributions:**

343 Y. T. and K. I. designed and performed the experiments, T. S. and K. I. performed the statistical
344 analyses, J. Y. and H. T. provided conceptual insights, and Y. T., J. Y., H. T. and K. I. wrote the
345 manuscript. All the authors agree to be held accountable for the content in the manuscript and
346 have approved the final version of the manuscript.

347

348 **Competing interests:**

349 We have no competing interests.

350

351 **Data Availability Statement**

352 The data that supports the findings of this study are available in the supplementary material of
353 this article.

354

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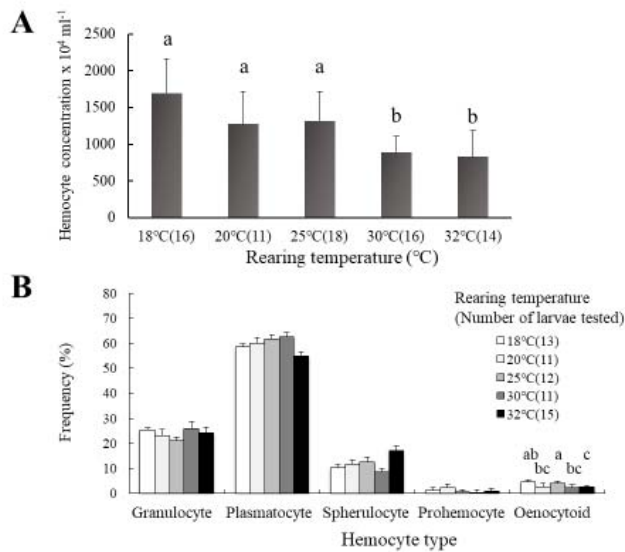
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484 **Figure Legends**

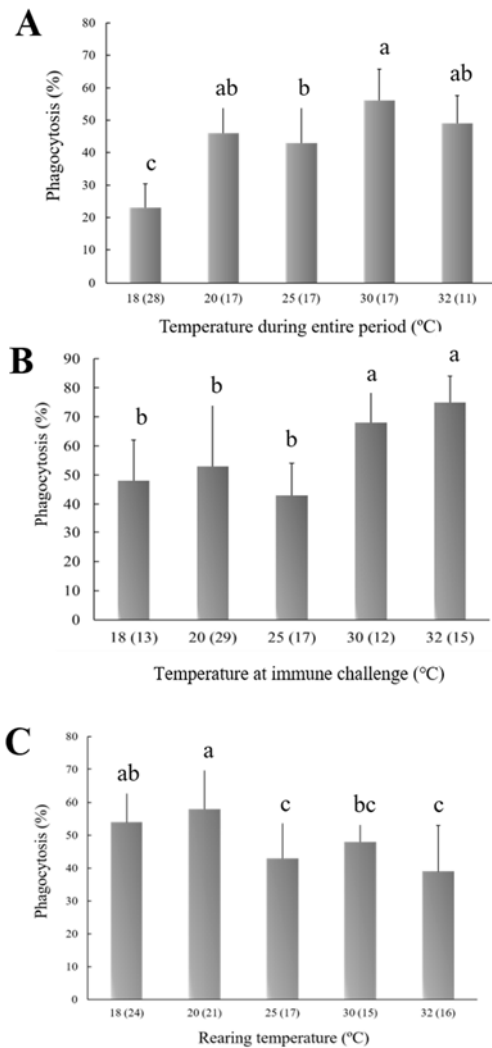


485

486 **Fig. 1.** Effects of the rearing temperature on hemocytes of last-instar larvae. Hemocyte
 487 concentration (A) and differential hemocyte count (B). The columns represent the means \pm SDs
 488 (A) and \pm SEs (B) of individual counts. Means with different letters indicate significant
 489 differences between treatments ($p < 0.05$, Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's multiple comparison
 490 test). The numbers in parentheses are the sample sizes. Note that no significant differences in
 491 the frequencies of granulocytes, plasmatocytes, spherulocytes and prohemocytes were found,
 492 and significant non-directional differences in the frequency of oenocytoids were detected. See
 493 Supplementary Tables S1, S2 and S6 for the data and their statistics.

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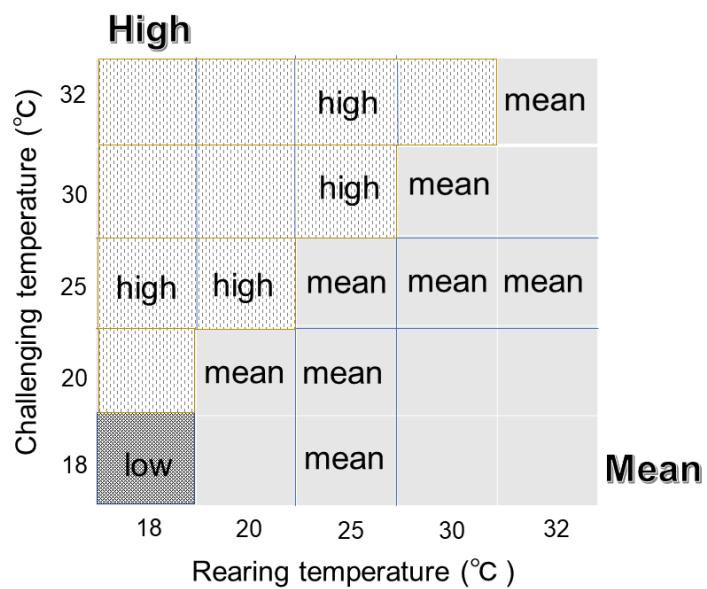


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497 **Fig. 2.** Phagocytic activity to the injected microbeads in final-instar larvae exposed to various
 498 combinations of rearing and immune challenge temperatures. **(A)** The immune challenge
 499 temperature was identical to the rearing temperature. **(B)** The rearing temperature was
 500 maintained at 25°C, but the immune challenge temperatures varied from 18 to 32°C. **(C)** The
 501 rearing temperatures varied from 18 to 32°C, and the immune challenge temperature was
 502 maintained at 25°C. The test procedure was as follows: The microbeads were injected into the
 503 larvae immediately after removal from the incubator with the rearing temperature, and the
 504 injected larva were instantly placed into the incubator with the challenge temperature. Two
 505 hours later, the degree of phagocytosis was measured (number of beads with/without
 506 phagocytosis). Means with different letters indicate significant differences between treatments
 507 ($p < 0.05$, Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's multiple comparison test). The numbers in
 508 parentheses are the sample sizes. See Supplementary Tables S3, S4, S5 and S7 for the data and
 509 their statistics.

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513 **Fig. 3.** Expected integrated effects of the rearing and challenge temperatures on phagocytosis.

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