



Toxicity of wine effluents and assessment of a depuration system for their control: assay with tadpoles of *Rhinella arenarum* (BUFONIDAE)

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Abstract

We evaluated the toxicity of the winery effluent and the efficiency of a symbiotic depuration system by means an experiment with *Rhinella arenarum* tadpoles. The studied effluent was taken from warehouses during the cleaning season. These effluents subsequently subjected to the purification treatment under evaluation. The effluent samples differentiated into two treatment levels: “raw” where the effluent was evaluated with field conditions and “treated” where the effluent was previously filtered with the symbiotic depuration system. The results of the bioassays compared with the physicochemical parameters determined in the effluent samples. The lethal response had a clear-cut correspondence with the effluent quality assessed utilizing physicochemical parameters. In all cases, dilution of the samples resulted in a significant reduction of their toxicity. It concluded that (a) winery effluents could be harmful to tadpoles of *R. arenarum*, (b) the symbiotic purification system used to treat wine effluents it would produce a significant reduction in the contaminant levels of the effluent. However, this reduction in contaminant levels does not provide sufficient safety for the release of the effluents into the environment.

Keywords Bioassays · Contaminants · Winery · Symbiotic

Introduction

Viticulture is one of the basic economic activities of many regions of Argentina and the world (Fernández Portela 2013). Effluents are generated during the processing of the grape (Bustamante et al. 2005), with around 1.5 l of industrial effluents for each liter of wine made (Crites and Tchobanoglous 2000). On many occasions, reuse of these discharges for irrigation has considered; however, their high

content of organic matter makes prior treatment indispensable (González et al. 2003).

Ignorance of the impact that these viticulture effluents can have when released to the environment has led to studying alternative technologies such as “symbiotic depuration” (García et al. 2008). This system distinguished by the existence of two zones, one for purification and another one for cultivation. The purification zone consists of a bed of gravel, which is isolated from the ground by a waterproof base. The residual water is applied for irrigation through a network of underground drippers, placed directly on the gravels, to cause its percolation through them. Once the impermeable base reached, the residual water flows, by gravity, to the pouring points, for reuse on other areas (Rodríguez et al. 2013).

Assessing exposure through determination of environmental concentrations of chemical agents, by itself, does not ensure the protection of aquatic life since it does not allow predicting their potential toxic consequences when synergistic or additive effects occur between the chemical elements in the mixture (Vighi et al. 2003). On the other hand, the toxicity of chemical agents is affected by other variables such as pH, organic matter, hardness, which determine their

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bioavailability and their potential for toxicity (Baker et al. 2003). To assess the effect of chemical agents, biological tools known as toxicity tests have developed, which use organisms that can represent the different trophic levels of an aquatic ecosystem (Sponza 2003).

Amphibians have a big part of vertebrate biomass and are key elements in the food chain (Blaustein and Wake 1990). Their dependence on water and moisture, their complex life cycle, and physiological sensitivity to environmental conditions through their extremely permeable skin make them true bioindicators and therefore are valuable for toxicity tests (Wake 1991).

Many of the wetland habitats that are crucial for amphibian reproduction and survival have altered by human activities including viticulture (Babini et al. 2016; Bishop et al. 1999). Amphibians that breed in ponds immersed or surrounded by industrial effluent are probably exposed to high levels of chemicals and can suffer serious consequences at the population level.

Thus, the potential effects of winery effluent on amphibian are of particular concern due to the lack of pristine habitats available, particularly for the reproduction and development of eggs and tadpoles. In general, the eggs and newly metamorphosed tadpoles are the most sensitive life stages to environmental contaminants (Power et al. 1989).

Although wine production does not have a reputation as a polluting industry, the winery wastewater has an acidic pH, a high organic charge and micronutrient and heavy metal contents all of which indicate that the wastewater has the potential to pose an environmental threat (Bustamante et al. 2005; Malandra et al. 2003; Mosse et al. 2011). An excess of organic charge could lead to eutrophication with a drastic decrease in dissolved oxygen and subsequent mortality of aerobic aquatic organisms (Mitsch and Gosselink 2015, 2000). A high heavy metal contents, an elevated nitrate level and low pH, could be reduce survivorship, alter the epidermis, both feeding and swimming activity, and could be generate malformations, decreasing the growth and development of amphibian tadpoles (Berger 1989; Brand et al. 2010; Gross et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2006).

Acute and short-term chronic toxicity tests have been widely applied in fish, macroinvertebrates and tadpoles for decades (Bélangier-Deschênes et al. 2013; Ji et al. 2008; Lajmanovich et al. 2018; Nimmo and Boraas 1982; Scott and Crunkilton 2000). Nonetheless, there are few studies examining the effects of chemical complex mixture on amphibian populations (Bishop and Pettit 1992). This is the first study that evaluates the influence of winery effluents in anurans and the effectiveness of an effluent treatment system using bioassays.

In this study, we tested the hypothesis that viticulture effluents still treated with symbiotic depuration system, are

not safe for the environment, affecting aquatic and terrestrial life. Winery effluents generates sublethal and lethal effects on anuran tadpoles. In this way, the objective of this work was to assess the toxicity of effluents from wineries and the performance of a symbiotic filtration system using acute bioassays with tadpoles of *Rhinella arenarum* as a sentinel organism.

Materials and methods

The tadpoles of *R. arenarum* were selected to carry out the present study. This species has an extensive neo-tropical distribution and it frequently found both natural and agricultural land. Frequent reproduction, large numbers of eggs in nests (Sanabria et al. 2007), and the easy maintenance under laboratory conditions make this organism an interesting candidate for toxicity testing. Egg masses used for this study collected from temporary and unpolluted ponds located at 25 km west of the city of San Juan, Department Zonda (31° 55' S, 68° 70' W). Ponds are within Monte phytoecography province (Cabrera 1971).

Eggs used in the exposure experiments were cultured in the laboratory until hatching. The hatching of the eggs occurred on the 3rd day of their arrival in the laboratory. The tadpoles acclimatized in glass tanks that contained dechlorinated tap water at 22 ± 2 °C for four days, artificial aeration, and 12–12 h light–dark cycle. The tests according to USEPA Standard Methods (2002). Tadpoles were fed daily ad libitum with a mixture of boiled lettuce and gelatin up to reaching Gosner stage 26–30 (Gosner 1960) at which point they were deposited randomly in the trial recipients according to the experimental design.

Exposure agent: effluents from “raw” and “treated” warehouses

Toxicity tests were carried out using as a test substance 30 L of effluents from three wineries distributed in the province (“toxic agent”).

Samples of winery effluents were taken from three different points in the winery industries (output, middle and contact of winery effluents with surrounding). The samples were taken during the process of washing and cleaning the winery industries, stored in polyethylene containers previously washed with 10% of nitric acid (HNO₃) and rinsed thoroughly with distilled water, recording their temperature, pH, and conductivity.

The samples were transported to the laboratory while maintained at 4 °C and within 5 h of sampling. Samples were kept refrigerated until their analysis. An experimental reactor was used to evaluate the effluent treatment system.

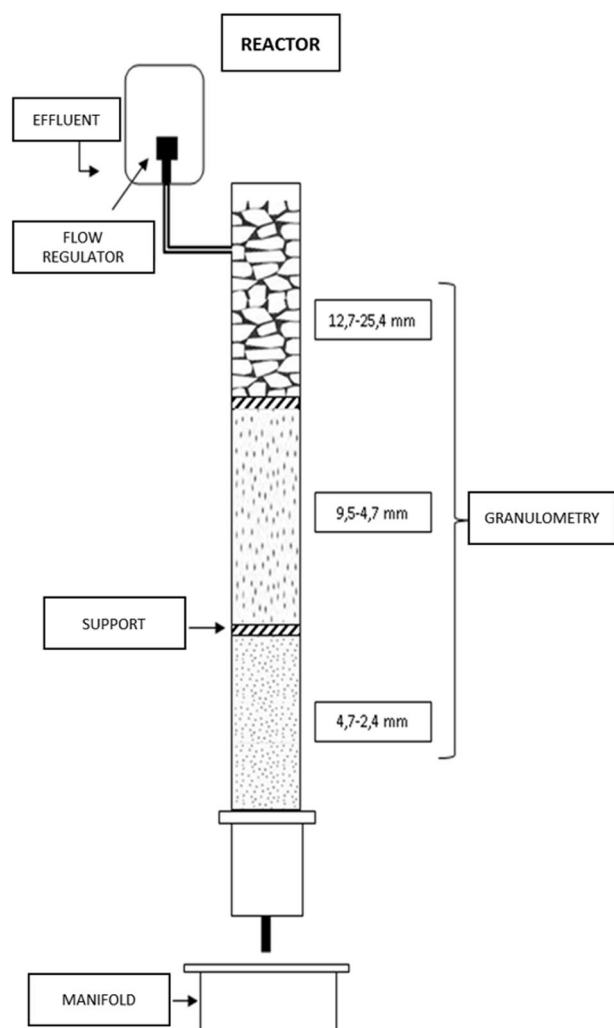


Fig. 1 Reactor used in the treatment of winery effluents (schematic draw), follow the Rodríguez et al. (2013)

Description and use of the reactor

The study conducted in a laboratory scale reactor that was constructed to mimic symbiotic depuration systems used by wineries. This consists of a vertical transparent acrylic tube, 11 cm in diameter and 100 cm in bed height. The treatable effluent has placed in a tank and through a conduit, and the effluent was evenly distributed in the upper part of the bed. Below the distributor is the purification zone, consisting of a bed of gravels 100 cm high and with a certain granulometry. In this way, the effluent descended through the gravel bed and collected from the bottom of the reactor for further analysis. In the upper part of the distributor was placed a bed of sand of 10 cm whose function was to allow the diffusion of oxygen as the effluent descended through the bed. The flow velocity of the effluent in the reactor with which it worked was 0.5 L/h, and identified as the most efficient in the treatment (Fig. 1).

Physicochemical parameters of the winery effluent

The physicochemical profile of the samples determined by evaluating the following parameters: pH, conductivity, dissolved solids, turbidity, nitrates, dissolved oxygen (DO), biological oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD), and dissolved heavy metals (Cd, Cr, and Pb). All the analyzes were carried out in triplicate, following the normalizing methods of Clesceri et al. (1992) and the American Public Health Association (1992).

Water quality was also characterized by means of the application of a physicochemical index: WQI contamination water index (Brown et al. 1970). It is determined considering temperature, DO, pH, BOD, nitrates, turbidity, and dissolved solids. It varies between 0–100, the scale being: very bad 0–25 (1), bad 26–50 (2), regular 51–70 (3), good 71–90 (4) and excellent > 90 (5). A score of 10 corresponds with a pollution status equivalent to that of a sewer effluent.

Exposure to the test substance

The test was conducted in 1 L polyethene containers with five organisms per containers and 500 ml of test solution. The tadpoles were acclimated for 48 h in hard water according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (2002).

Tadpoles were placed in polyethylene recipients containing the following solutions: (A) hard artificial water (control); (B) raw wine effluents. (B1) without dilution (100%), (B2) diluted (10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90%); (C) treated vitiviniculture effluent, (C1) without dilution (100%), (C2) diluted (10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90%). After its preparation, it was allowed to stand for one hour, to achieve uniformity and homogeneity in the solution.

The assays were semi-static with ten replicates of each condition. The dilution water was dechlorinated by aeration for 48 h. The length of the test was 96 h according to USEPA Standard Methods (2002). At the end of the experiment was labeled and fixed in 10% v/v formaldehyde for further evaluation of morphological abnormalities. The experiment was carried out under controlled conditions of temperature 22 ± 1 °C and a photoperiod of 12 light-dark hours with artificial aeration. Tadpoles not fed throughout the experiment.

Survival

Survival was quantified every 24 h during the exposure time. Each individual considered dead if no movement detected after gentle prodding. The dead individuals removed from containers. Dead individuals have taken at each observation time, were labeled and fixed in 10% v/v formaldehyde for further evaluation of morphological abnormalities.

Table 1 Physicochemical parameters of the winery effluents samples used with the *R. arenarum* tadpoles assay

	Raw effluent		Treated effluent		Control		CMP		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	FAO	DH	LVA
pH	6.41	0.11	7.25	0.23	7.66	0.20	6.90	43379	43349
Conductivity ($\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$)	1202	1.00	1307	6.08	26.00	5.40	>1200	>1400	
DO ($\text{mg O}_2/\text{l}$)	3.00	0.10	6.00	0.00	10.00	0.00			1000.00
Nitrates ($\text{mg N-NO}_3/\text{l}$)	16.57	4.13	16.80	0.46	0.00	0.00	17.00	20.00	
BOD ($\text{mg O}_2/\text{l}$)	3480.00	207.85	1026.66	11.55	0.80	0.02	100.00–200.00	10.000–200.00	
COD ($\text{mg O}_2/\text{l}$)	1945.00	207.86	1053.33	5.77	0.00	0.00	250.00–500.00	25.000–500.00	
Dissolved solids	806.67	0.58	403.66	0.63	0.00	0.00			
Turbidity (UTN)	80.00	1.66	30.00	1.44	0.00	0.00	100.00		
Heavy metals ($\mu\text{g}/\text{l}$)									
	Cd	0.50	0.37	0.43	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.20
	Cr	0.22	0.02	0.18	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.10	2.00
	Pb	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		1.00

The mean, the standard deviation (SD) and maximum permitted quantity (CMP) for each parameter according to Hydraulics (DH, Annex I of Decree No. 0638/87, Regulatory of Law No. 5824/87, 2006), United Nations Organization for Agriculture and Food (FAO, 1985), and the protection of the aquatic life of Argentina (LVA, Law 24,051, Decree 831/93 Argentina, 1993)

Sub-lethal effects

Registration of behavior every 6 h done after gently swirling the water five times with a glass rod and observing for 1 min the swimming activity of each organism.

Observed behaviors were identified previously and categorized as (A) ES: Erratic swimming (swimming in circles); (B) LOR: Loss of reflex (delayed response after stimulation); (C) LOB: Loss of balance (zigzag swimming); (D) RS: Regular swimming (Reyes et al. 2003; Agostini et al. 2010). The observer was blind with respect to the treatment combination the boxes belonged to.

Development of tadpoles

Growth assessed by measuring body length and weight of the tadpoles. The length of the body (LB) measured with a digital caliper (0.01 mm precision) after 24 h exposure with four measurements in total. The average weight measured in the wet weight of the tadpoles, determined with an analytical balance (OHAUS / PAD14 of 0.0001 g precision). The measurements have taken on living organisms. To minimize stress, tadpoles were submerged in water during staging and measurement, except to take the weight mass.

Anatomical anomalies

After fixation, the tadpole's external morphology examined with a binocular stereoscopic microscope (Arcano, China, Magnification 2 \times –4 \times). Tadpoles were stained with Alcian Blue for cartilage visualization and cleared according to Wassersug (1976). Their branchial skeletons were then examined with a binocular microscope and photographed with a digital camera (Nikon D80, Japan and normal lens 50 mm Sigma, Japan).

Data analyses

The results were recorded as cumulative mortality and expressed as the surviving proportion. The normality of the distribution of the data was checked by means of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the homogeneity of variance by the Levene median test (Zar 1999). The LC_{50} value determined by the PROBIT Analysis (Finney 1952). Biological data (survival, body length, body weight) were statistically analyzed using the Mann-Whitney test. A level of probability below 0.05 was considered to be significant.

The water quality index (WQI) determined following Dinius (1972). Finally, the level of acute effects not observed (LAENO) was determined (highest concentration for which the recorded mortality is 10% or less).

Analyses were performed using the SPSS software (Version 12.0) and package in 'R' version 3.0 (Team 2015).

Results

The water quality index revealed a "bad" type of pollution (1) for the raw winery effluent, $WQI = 30.6$, and "regular" for the treated effluent $WQI = 51.2$. The value of WQI obtained for raw effluent indicated that its quality is not adequate for irrigation without first performing a treatment, unacceptable for fishing with aquatic life limited and danger for contact. Contrary, the values of WQI for treated effluent is much encouraging, indicate that its quality is adequate for irrigation and all industry without before treatment and only uncertain for fishing. According to the results at 24 h, the toxicity of the diluted raw effluent was higher than that of the treated effluent. The physicochemical parameters of the winery effluent samples used in the present work summarized in Table 1.

Table 2 Acute toxicity (LC_{50}) of the winery effluent (raw and treated) to *R. arenarum* larvae

Exposure time (h)	Raw effluent			Treated effluent		
	LC_{50} (%)	LL–UL	df	LC_{50} (%)	LL–UL	df
24	54.90	50.20–59.40	98	90.00	76.20–98.70	98
48	39.20	27.40–50.70	98	86.10	70.90–95.30	98
72	36.10	25.40–46.30	98	86.10	71.50–90.80	98
96	35.50	25.90–44.70	98	86.00	70.90–89.90	98

gl degrees of freedom, LL–UL lower limit-upper limit with 95% confidence intervals

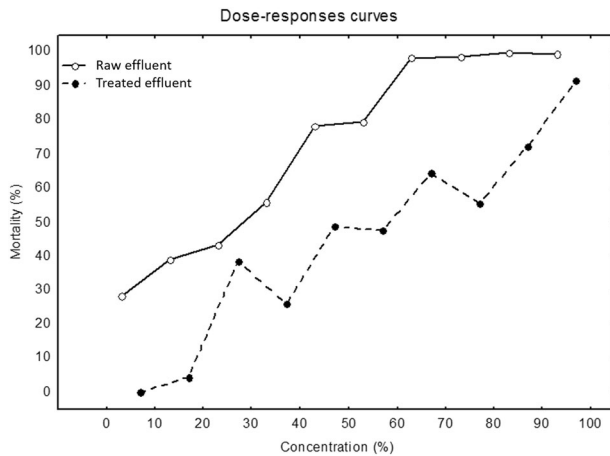


Fig. 2 Dose-responses curves of tadpole *R. arenarum* for raw and treated effluent concentrations

Survival

The results of the PROBIT analysis for raw and treated effluents are presented in Table 2; showing a harmful effect to the effluent even after having undergone symbiotic treatment. The highest LC_{50} was obtained for the raw effluent with a value of 54.5% at 24 h whereas the treated effluent had a value of 90% and remained relatively constant.

The longest survival after the experimental phase (96 h) obtained in the control (100 %), followed by the tadpoles in the treated effluent ($\bar{X} = 2.38 \pm 2.03$), and finally the raw effluent ($\bar{X} = 1 \pm 1.56$). Survival decreased with the increase in concentration and with the passing of hours, reaching zero survivors between 6 and 12 h at concentrations of 70, 80, 90 and 100% of the raw effluent (Fig. 2). Survival decreased exponentially from the start of the bioassay until the 30 h, after this period, it remained relatively constant until completely stabilized 40 h after the start of the experiment (Fig. 3).

Significant differences were found in larval mortality between raw effluent vs control ($U = 11760$, $p = 0.0001$, $n = 110$), treated effluent vs control ($U = 50318$, $p = 0.0001$, $n = 110$) and raw effluent vs treated effluent ($U = 33294$,

$p = 0.012$, $n = 100$). LC_{50} was markedly lower for all hours, reaching a value of 35.5% for the raw effluent at 96 h (Table 2).

Growth

The tadpoles exposed to the winery effluents (raw and treated) presented a reduction in average body length concerning the control treatment. The average length of the tadpoles was greater in all cases for the control. Significant differences were found between length of tadpoles in raw effluent ($\bar{X} = 12.21 \pm 0.86$) vs control ($\bar{X} = 13.35 \pm 1.04$) ($U = 1639.5$, $p = 0.01$, $n = 55$), and between treated effluent ($\bar{X} = 12.95 \pm 1.67$) vs control ($U = 2832$, $p = 0.006$, $n = 55$). Regarding the weight of the tadpoles subjected to the treatments (raw effluent–treated effluent), they showed a reduction compared to the control. The highest average weight values for all hours obtained in the control ($\bar{X} = 2.5 \pm 0.5$), followed by the treated effluent ($\bar{X} = 1.95 \pm 0.6$), with the lowest average weights corresponding to the raw effluent ($\bar{X} = 1.79 \pm 0.75$) (Fig. 4, Table 3). However, no significant differences in weight were found between tadpoles in raw effluent vs treated effluent, and vs control.

Behavior

All effects on larval behavior resulted in a higher degree of injury with an increase in concentration. The three LOB, LOR and ES behaviors were observed in the two treatments, raw and treated effluents, in different percentages. The most observed behavior was LOR, followed by ES. At 96 h of testing, 97% of the surviving individuals in the raw effluent and 95% in the treated effluent had LOR (Table 4).

Abnormalities

The alterations detected after 96 h of exposure to the effluent can be seen in Fig. 5. These included anomalies in the axial axis in different degrees and epithelial tissue destruction.

Tadpoles exposed to different effluent concentrations showed varying degrees of notochord collapses compared

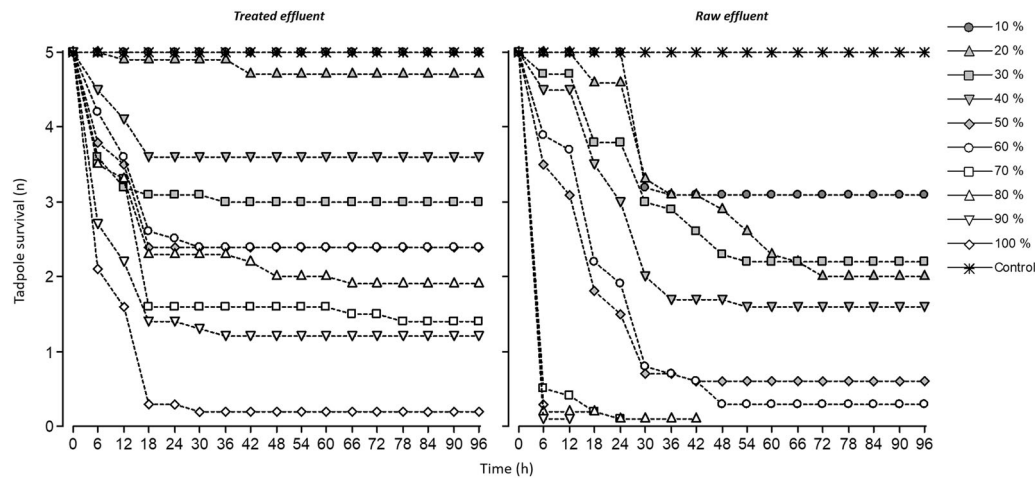


Fig. 3 Concentration–response relationship for *R. arenarum* tadpoles continuously exposed to raw effluent **a** and treated effluent **b** describing the rate of survival from the beginning of the exposure up the finish. * Significantly different with respect to control group ($P < 0.05$)

to those of the control, which had a uniform shape. The number of individuals with scoliosis (collapse of the notochord) increased with an increase in concentration of the effluent. Of the total tadpoles exposed, 23.4% had malformations in the raw effluent and only 8.4% in the treated effluent. Of the total malformed tadpoles corresponding to the raw effluent, 25% have exposed to concentrations of 100%. In the group exposed to the treated effluent, 24% have exposed to 100% concentrations (Fig. 6). In all cases, the malformation observed is a ventro-dorsal curvature, known as kyphosis (Yaman and Dalbayrak 2014).

Discussion

The continuous growth of industrial activity and lacks of control for environmental protection, contribute to a progressive alteration of the environment (Omer 2008). Unlike isolated toxins, changes in water quality have received little attention regarding their adverse effects on amphibian tadpoles, despite being a constant element in cities and towns (Hatch and Blaustein 2000; Ferrari et al. 2005; Peltzer et al. 2008). Our results show that the survival and health status of tadpoles of *R. arenarum* would be affected by the physicochemical characteristics of viticulture effluents.

Survival

The tadpoles of *R. arenarum* showed little resistance to raw or treated effluents in high concentrations. At the lowest concentrations, survived individuals showed signs of sub-lethal toxicity. Similar results on mortality were found by Goswami et al. (2013) when evaluating the effect of urban effluents on tadpoles of *D. melanostictus*. The LC_{50} values

obtained were very low and were directly related to time; the highest mortality has found during the first hours of exposure to the effluent. The values obtained for survival and LC_{50} are comparable to those obtained by Ferrari et al. (2005) on the effect on *R. arenarum* of receiving water from urban effluents, having a clear correspondence with the concentration of the effluent, since its dilution resulted in a significant toxicity reduction in the samples.

The low content of DO, high values of BOD and COD, and high nitrate concentrations found in wine effluents could be among the main causes of the high mortality of tadpoles of *R. arenarum*. The impact is remarkable on anurans given their high oxygen consumption throughout metamorphosis (Smith 1997). States of hypoxia or anoxia result in a slowing of the physiological and metamorphic changes necessary for the development of tadpoles (Burggren and Mwalukoma 1983). Smith (1997) found that they cause decreased activity, vigor, and deformities in bullfrog tadpoles. Costa (1967) found that swimming increases in an excessive way, a behavior associated with improving water oxygenation.

The concentrations of heavy metals were higher for the raw effluent. In our case, we found two heavy metals, Cd and Cr. The concentrations of Cd and Cr in treated and raw effluents exceed the regulatory values for irrigation and drainage systems established by Decree 2 107/2006 for the province of San Juan. The values obtained are similar to those reported by Vivas Agrafojo et al. (2008), and lower than those obtained for effluents from food industries by Pellón et al. (2003). Heavy metals cause, in most cases, mortality of organisms. Their presence can lead to biochemical imbalances and glandular damage, producing an abnormal development (Goswami et al. 2013). In the aqueous medium, chromium can be found as Cr (III) and Cr

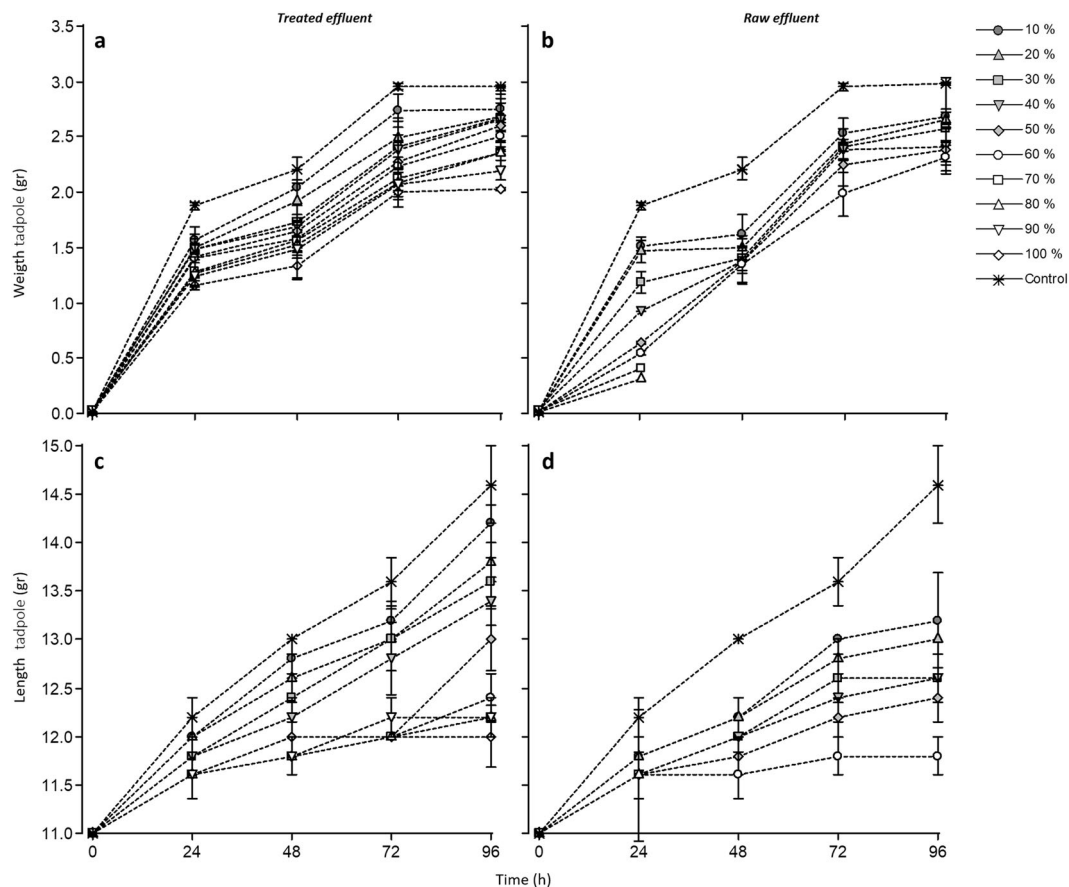


Fig. 4 Effluents concentration response curves of body weight and length of the tadpoles during acute exposure. **a** Body weight treated effluent, **b** body weight raw effluent, **c** body length treated effluent, and **d** body length raw effluent

Table 3 Gravimetric data of *Rhinella arenarum* tadpoles exposed to the winery effluents (raw and treated) and control every 24 h

Treatment	Hours	Weight larvae (g)	SD
Raw	24	0.5146	0.4120
	48	0.9439	0.3123
	72	1.7893	0.4039
	96	1.9773	0.4823
Treated	24	0.8789	0.2445
	48	1.1520	0.3452
	72	1.7926	0.4033
	96	2.0040	0.3654
Control	24	1.3740	0.0705
	48	1.7100	0.2288
	72	2.4520	0.0690
	96	2.4820	0.0204

All data are expressed as the mean and standard deviation (SD)

Table 4 Behaviors dateof *Rhinella arenarum* tadpoles exposed to the winery effluent (raw and treated) every 24 h

Exposure time (h)	Behaviors		
	LOB (%)	LOR (%)	ES(%)
Raw effluent			
24	02	80	18
48	00	94	06
72	00	97	03
96	00	97	03
Treated effluent			
24	14	65	21
48	08	81	11
72	06	86	08
96	00	95	05

LOB loss of balance, LOR loss of reflex, ES erratic swimming

(VI). Cr(III) and, in low concentrations, it is essential to maintain fundamental processes of life (metabolism of glucose, lipids and proteins) (Alvarado-Gómez et al. 2002). However, it is toxic in high concentrations (Pawlisz et al.

1997; Natale et al. 2000). On the other hand, Cr (VI) is not known for exerting beneficial actions and is defined as toxic, being attributed mutagenic and carcinogenic properties (Rai and Mehrotra 2008; Wan Ngah et al. 2006). As for

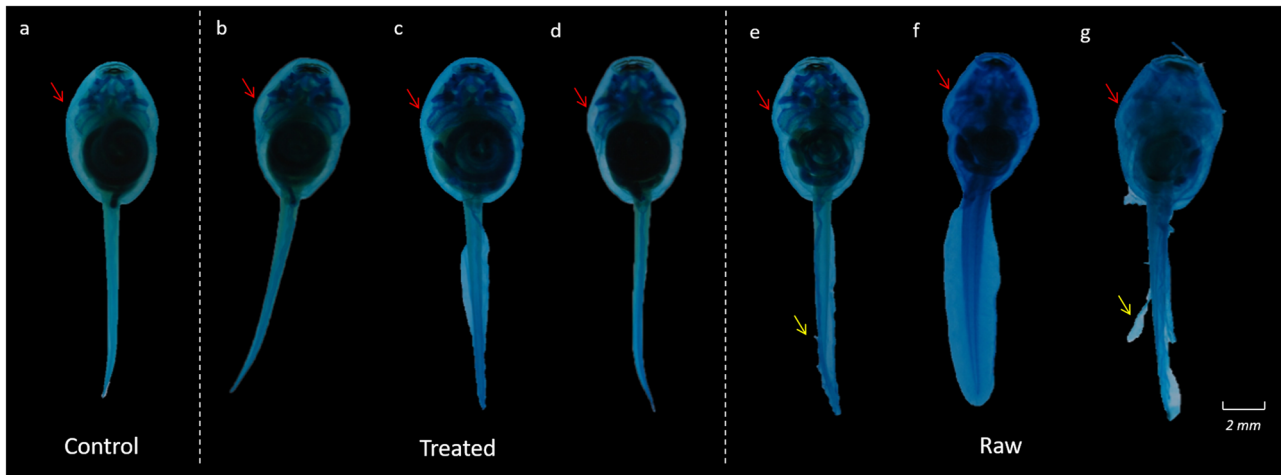
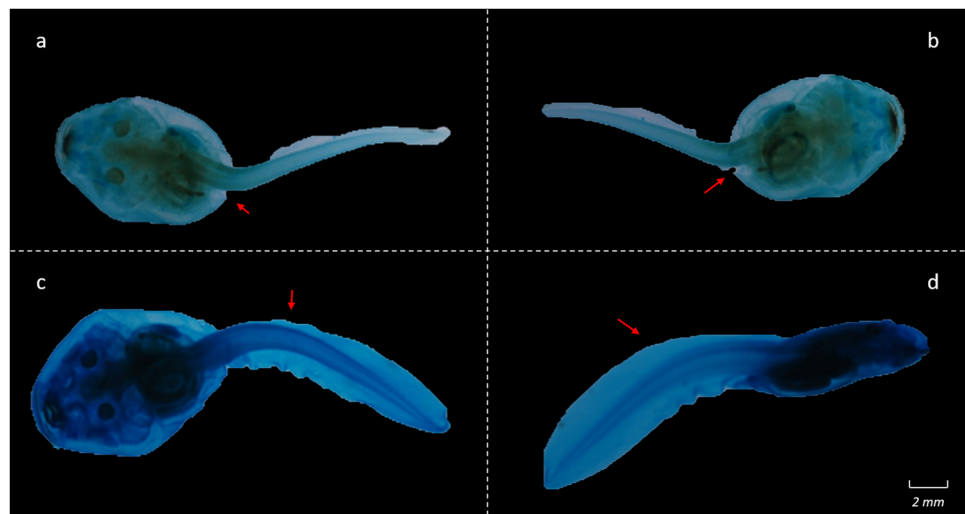


Fig. 5 Lateral full-body views of tadpoles *R. arenarum* exposed to the winery effluent, diaphanized and stained with Alcian blue. Control tadpoles **a**, treated effluent at 10% **b**, 50% **c** and 100% **d**; and 10% raw

effluent **e**, 50% **f**, and 100% **g**. Red arrows indicate branchial apparatus; yellow arrows indicate destruction of tissues. Scale bar 2 mm

Fig. 6 Tadpoles with different degrees of notochordal curvature (Kipphosis) after exposed 24 h to 100 % of raw effluent **a**, **b** and 48 h to 50 % **c**, **d** to raw effluents. Scale bar 2 mm



Cd, it is characterized by being very toxic in small concentrations (James and Little 2003; Gross et al. 2009). Gross et al. (2009) found that Cd concentrations of 0.00025 mg/l increased larval growth, but concentrations of 0.2 mg/l increased their mortality. James and Little (2003) also observed its lethal effect on *B. americanus* tadpoles at concentrations of 0.54 mg/l. Cd has shown to have drastic effects on the growth and development of tadpoles (Read and Tyler 1994). The cumulative effect of Cd on tissues and organs is the main problem caused by this heavy metal (Pérez-Coll and Herkovits 1996).

Changes in the pH of water can be generated by various agricultural, industrial and domestic substances (Muñoz-Escobar and Palacio-Baena 2010). The pH values found for two effluents (raw and treated) were within the regulatory values for irrigation water set by the Hydraulics Department; and within the pH range of 4.6–8 established for

winery effluents by Monge and Gutiérrez-Barquín (2001); pH 3.9–7.9 by Prodanov and Cobo Reuters (2004); and pH 4.2–7.8 by Oliva (2007). However, Henao Muñoz and Bernal Bautista (2011) observed a delay in the development of embryos and erratic nests in tadpoles exposed to pH lower than regulated for irrigation ($7.0 < \text{pH} > 7.5$), and detected detachment of their external membranes and sudden death. For his part, Rios-López (2008) found that conductivity values of 800 ms/cm, less than do those established by the current regulations (1200–2000 ms/cm), decreased the survival of tadpoles of *B. marinus* and *L. arbitaris*.

Growth

This study provided evidence that *R. arenarum* tadpoles exposed to raw and treated effluents are affected in their

development, experiencing a reduction in their body size. Their reduction in weight and length could be associated with an increase in metabolic cost due to cellular detoxification and depuration processes, to the reduced activity of some enzymes (Vallee and Ulmer 1972), and to a greater demand for the synthesis of amino acids (Nishisaka and Kishimoto 1994). This reduction in weight and length has a potentially negative effect on anurans versus predation since large tadpoles will have a greater chance of surviving and reaching full adulthood than small ones (Collins 1979; Smith 1987). During stress, the major amount of energy is used for defensive physiological mechanisms and maintenance of homeostasis that is an energetically expensive process, and less energy is left for investment in life history traits (mass, growth) (Costantini 2014).

On the other hand, those surviving tadpoles will be able to undergo an early metamorphosis and to prolong it before reaching their threshold size, resulting in individuals with reduced body sizes and/or deformities (Harris et al. 2000; Boone and Semlitsch 2002). Long periods of metamorphosis or small sized adults can have many consequences in nature. Small larval sizes on reaching metamorphosis affect individual reproduction, survival, immunocompetence and the ability to escape predators and defend territory (Carey et al. 1999; Hayes et al. 2006; Shenoy et al. 2009). In this way, the population would be negatively affected by a low recruitment of juvenile individuals and/or by the presence of adults affected in their performance (Werner 1986; Bridges and Boone 2003).

The presence of nitrates and heavy metals (Cd-Cr) in values above the levels regulated for viticulture effluents with high conductivity values could also explain the reductions in size observed in *R. arenarum* tadpoles. Even at very low concentrations, all of them negatively affect growth and development time (Gallo-Delgado et al. 2006; Muñoz-Escobar and Palacio-Baena 2010; Smith et al. 2006). In our study, nitrate concentrations in the two treatments were within the range established by Prodanov and Cobo Reuters (2004) for effluents from cellars (13–220 mg/l), lower than those recorded by Monge and Gutiérrez-Barquín (2001) (61 mg/l), and did not exceed those established by the Hydraulics Department. However, Rouse et al. (1999) found that lakes with nitrate concentrations of 16.8 mg/l had sublethal and lethal effects on amphibians. Nitrate alters the growth and development of amphibian tadpoles (Berger 1989; Jofre and Karasov 1999). Among the most common adverse effects are reduced feeding and mobility, doubled tails, body swelling and deformities (Berger 1989). It can also lower pH and oxygen levels (Tattersall and Boutilier 1999).

Sublethal effects of acidity on embryos and tadpoles of amphibians have also been reported to affect their

embryonic development, growth, foraging ability and avoidance of predators (Pierce 1985). Regarding conductivity, the values in wine effluents did not exceed those established by the current regulations to be turned over for irrigation, natural courses and drains. These values are within the range reported by Oliva (2007) (600–2000 ms/cm). However, Chinathamby et al. (2006) found growth retardation and abnormal behaviors when exposing tadpoles of *L. ewingi* to concentrations of 500–800–1000 ms/cm.

Behavior

Knowledge about alterations in the behavior of tadpoles of *R. arenarum* against toxic components is scarce, the observed behaviors are important as sublethal signs because they give us more rapid information about the effect of a toxic substance, allowing us to prevent the spread of the toxic agent to organisms where its effect may still be masked.

Studies on sublethal effects on larval behavior are scarce and, in the works referred to, they are part of the final observations (Reyes et al. 2003; Álvarez-Colombo et al. 2011). In our study, in both treatments, we found three types of behavior: erratic swimming, loss of reflexes and loss of balance. The “LOR” behavior increased with the increase in exposure time and with increased concentrations, however, “LOB” and “ES” decreased with these increases. These behaviors had already been observed by exposing tadpoles of the Cuban frog *O. septentrionalis* to the herbicide glyphosate (Reyes et al. 2003). Similar behaviors observed in bullfrog tadpoles, *L. catesbeianus*, exposed to potassium permanganate (Álvarez-Colombo et al. 2011) and in tadpoles of *D. bogerti* exposed to mercury chloride (Muñoz-Escobar and Palacio-Baena 2010).

Abel and Skidmore (1975), and Jonsson and Toledo (1993), showed similar alterations of swimming behavior in fish. Some of these alterations can be explained by acclimatization to the toxic agent or by energy expenditure, which involves metabolism (Rondón-Barragán et al. 2007).

All of the components found in viticulture effluents have been shown to have some effect on the behavior of tadpoles and could explain the ethological characteristics observed in the common toad *R. arenarum*.

All alterations in the observed behaviors are significant because of their importance to the conservation of the ability to escape, which determines a great part of the survival of this species in the natural environment (Rondón-Barragán et al. 2007). Thus, tadpoles with behaviors such as LOB, LOR, and ES show a reduction in their ability to escape, to search for food or move to more suitable areas in the face of adverse conditions affecting survival of the population.

Phenotypic abnormalities

Skin

Although information on the effects of toxic elements on the tissue of amphibians is limited, some studies have shown their high susceptibility to foreign substances (Rondón-Barragán et al. 2007; Álvarez-Colombo et al. 2011). Anurans exposed in a direct way to the aquatic environment; their skin is a complex organ and the main route of exchange of gases for respiration, water, and ions, thus being particularly exposed to the action of toxins (Duellman and Trueb 1994; Natale 2006; Prokić et al. 2016)

The tadpoles exposed to raw and treated effluents showed the destruction of the epidermis in different degrees, depending on the concentration to which they were exposed and the treatment they underwent. Tadpoles exposed to raw and treated effluents at the highest concentrations experienced the most serious effects on their epidermis. Similar effects on skin destruction were observed both by Álvarez and Nicieza (2002) as Prieto et al. (1986), where the damage occurred externally and with irreversible characteristics.

Alterations in the epidermis or the destruction thereof are usually associated with an inflammatory reaction to an irritant (Rondón-Barragán et al. 2007). In those cases in which skin detachment was observed and individuals have resisted the lethal effect of the toxic agent, the damage turned out to be irreversible (Álvarez and Nicieza 2002).

In most cases, toxic agents such as heavy metals, detergents and even pH can be the cause of skin destruction and capillarity. The presence of these compounds in viticulture effluents and of a pH of 6 (raw effluent) and 7 (treated effluent) could explain the damage observed. This damage often leads to a reduction in oxygen diffusion capacity and subsequent collateral effects (Lajmanovich et al. 1998).

Malformations

In this study, the malformation observed in *R. arenarum* tadpoles, due to the effect of the effluent, was scoliosis, and was observed in samples of raw and treated effluents, although in a greater percentage in the former. This malformation coincides with that reported for tadpoles of the crab *C. granulata* exposed to sublethal concentrations (Keselman 2002), and with that of tadpoles of *P. biligoni-gerus* found by Sandoval (2008), with different degrees of curvature in the notochord. It has also been documented in investigations with heavy metals such as Cd and Cr (Unrine et al. 2004). Scoliosis has been reported in *P. cruciger* tadpoles exposed to agrochemicals such as glyphosate,

chlorpyrifos, etc. (Jayawardena et al. 2010) and in tadpoles of anurans exposed to nitrate values of 16.8 mg/l.

The concentrations of nitrates and heavy metals in both effluents (raw and treated) above the regulation could explain the results obtained. Brand et al. (2010) observed malformations in tadpoles exposed to Cd.

Caudal scoliosis adversely affects the swimming of tadpoles (Burke and Michel 2008). Scoliotic tadpoles show slower swim and escape velocities, being more susceptible to predation than tadpoles exhibiting a normal phenotype (Burke and Michel 2008).

It is important, however, to distinguish between acute toxicity from specific pesticides and biological results based on synergistic interactions between mixtures of contaminants (Bridges and Boone 2003; Fagotti et al. 2005; Relyea 2005). In this sense, a clear cause-effect relationship cannot be found for physicochemical characteristic or substance in particular, given that certain compounds are capable of interacting chemically when combined. Klaassen (1996), hypothesized that exposure to mixtures of pesticides can result in synergistic or antagonistic effects for health because the metabolism of one pesticide can affect the metabolism of another one.

Although the toxic effects observed in tadpoles of *R. arenarum* exposed to viticulture effluents could be attributed to the synergy between chemical compounds and environmental factors, the effects of cumulative exposure to contaminants and their synergistic interactions with environmental stress factors, natural or anthropic, are uncertain (Fagotti et al. 2005).

Conclusions

Contamination by effluents from wineries could affect the aquatic life of the tadpoles studied, exerting a harmful effect on their behavior, morphology, growth and survival. The symbiotic filtering system used causes a reduction in the effluent pollutant levels; however, it is not sufficient for the effluent to be released into the environment.

Finally, although the physicochemical characteristics are central when analyzing an effluent, they do not by themselves allow characterizing the impact of its release. It is considered that an integrated approach is required for an adequate characterization of the quality of an effluent or a treatment system, using physical-chemical analysis and bioassays in a complementary manner.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. All members at the time of the investigation belonged to the Faculty of Exact, Physical, and Natural Sciences of the National University of San Juan. The corresponding author was the beneficiary of the CICITCA Scholarship.

Ethical approval Although at the time of the investigation there was no ethical committee at the National University of San Juan, all international, national and institutional guidelines applicable to the care and use of animals have followed.

Informed consent All authors declare to be participants in the research and their respective future consequences.

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