

# How Diet Leads to Defensive Dynamism

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**HOW DIET LEADS TO DEFENSIVE DYNAMISM: EFFECT OF THE DIETARY  
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CHEMICALLY DEFENDED BEETLE**

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HOW DIET LEADS TO DEFENSIVE DYNAMISM: EFFECT OF THE DIETARY  
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**Abstract-**The impact of different diets on chemical defense has been extensively studied in animals that sequester defensive chemicals from food. However, there are fewer studies of diet-mediated variation in autogenously produced defenses. Ladybird beetles, which use autogenously synthesized defensive alkaloids, are used as models in a wide diversity of studies of chemical defense, specifically in studies of intraspecific variation in color pattern and chemical defense. Many aphidophagous ladybirds consume a wide diversity of aphid prey, which vary in quality and thus could affect the synthesis of chemical defense. We measured alkaloid recovery rate after reflex bleeding by the ladybird *Adalia bipunctata* on two different aphid diets, the high quality *Acyrtosiphon pisum* and the lower quality *Aphis fabae*. Alkaloids reaccumulated in ladybirds more slowly when they were fed *A. fabae* than when they were fed *A. pisum* and females generally had more alkaloid than males, but reaccumulated alkaloid more slowly. Recovery times were in excess of 12 days. There appeared to be a weak positive relationship between alkaloid level and time since reflex bleeding for eggs of *A. pisum*- but not *A. fabae*-fed females. Our findings on diet and alkaloid synthesis in ladybirds suggest that chemical defense levels are very dynamic, indicating that studies conducted at a single point in time, such as those focused on ladybird color pattern, fail to consider a wide diversity of

temporal variation that occurs in the field. This is likely true for many autogenously produced chemical defense systems in a diversity of other organisms.

**Key Words-**Coccinellidae, chemical defense, *Adalia bipunctata*, dietary generalist, adaline.

### **Declarations**

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### **Authors' contributions:**

ZO and JJS formulated the idea and developed the methodology. ZO conducted the experiments and statistical analysis, with advice from JJS. ZO and JJS wrote the manuscript.

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## INTRODUCTION

Chemical defense is widely used as a protective mechanism in insects and other animals. Defensive chemicals are generally obtained either by sequestration from the diet or through autogenous synthesis (e.g. Zvereva and Kozlov 2016; Ruxton et al. 2018). Intraspecific variation in both quality and quantity of these toxins has often been observed (Brower et al.

1982; Jones et al. 1987; Holliday et al. 2009), being frequently quantitative rather than qualitative (Speed et al. 2012). While there are a lot of examples of variation due to diet in directly sequestered defenses (e.g. Lampert and Bowers 2010; Ramos et al. 2012; Agrawal et al. 2021), there are very few documented cases related to diet mediated variation in autogenously synthesized defensive chemicals (Brückner and Heethoff 2018).

Ladybird beetles (Coccinellidae) use endogenously synthesized taxon-specific defensive alkaloids (Pasteels et al. 1973; Dalozé et al. 1995; King and Meinwald 1996; Laurent et al. 2005). These alkaloids protect the beetles against a diversity of natural enemies (e.g. Marples et al. 1989; Marples 1993; Hemptinne et al. 2000). When disturbed, adults and larvae emit droplets of alkaloid-bearing hemolymph (Happ and Eisner 1961; Kendall 1971), a defense mechanism known as reflex bleeding. Eggs and pupae also are protected by alkaloids (Dalozé et al. 1995; King and Meinwald 1996). Synthesis and use of these endogenous alkaloids are energetically costly processes (Holloway et al. 1991; Grill and Moore 1998; Bayoumy et al. 2020).

Ladybirds have been used as models in a wide diversity of studies of chemical defense (e.g. de Jong et al. 1991; Marples 1993; Grill and Moore 1998; Sloggett et al. 2009; Arenas et al. 2015). One area of considerable interest has been the link between color pattern variation and defensive capability, both intra- and interspecifically (Bezzarides et al. 2007; Blount et al. 2012; Winters et al. 2014; Arenas et al. 2015; Wheeler et al. 2015). However, although intraspecific variation in chemical defense concentration is accepted as a given in many of these studies, the bases of this variability are only partially understood. Genetic variation in the defensive capability of ladybirds is known (de Jong et al. 1991) and rearing temperature, microbial infection and food quantity appear to play a role (Blount et al. 2012; Steele et al. 2020a, b), however dietary quality mediated via prey species has not been studied. Generalist aphidophagous ladybirds consume many different aphid prey species of differing dietary

quality (Hodek and Evans 2012). Thus, dietary quality related to prey species is potentially a very significant factor in determining chemical defense strength.

In this paper we take a dynamic temporal approach to measuring chemical defense responses to dietary quality, by measuring alkaloid accumulation in ladybirds provided with qualitatively different aphid diets after reflex bleeding. For this we use a well-established model system that has been used to study the effect of different aphid diets for over 50 years, the two-spotted ladybird *Adalia bipunctata* (L.) and its aphid prey, the pea aphid *Acyrtosiphon pisum* (Harris) and the black bean aphid *Aphis fabae* Scopoli. While *A. pisum* is a high-quality prey, *A. fabae* has been shown to be poorer for the ladybird: deleterious effects have previously been observed on larval survival, development time, subsequent adult weight, adult pre-oviposition period, fecundity, fertility, and longevity (Blackman 1965, 1967; El-Hariri 1966a, b; Rana et al. 2002). In spite of this *A. fabae* is regularly used for feeding and breeding by *A. bipunctata* in the wild (e.g. Banks 1955). *Adalia bipunctata* synthesizes adaline (Tursch et al. 1973) as a major alkaloid and adalinine (Lognay et al. 1996) as a minor one for its defense. As in other ladybirds these alkaloids are synthesized in the fat body of the beetle from fatty acid precursors (Laurent et al. 2001; Haulotte et al. 2012). Using this model system, this study asked how diet affects the reaccumulation of the autogenously synthesized alkaloids of male and female *A. bipunctata* over time, and also its effect on the alkaloid content of the eggs that the females produce.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

*Insect Culture.* Adult *A. bipunctata* were acquired from Entocare Biologische Gewasbescherming Wageningen, The Netherlands. Ladybirds were maintained in a constant-climate cabinet set at 21 °C, 70% RH and a 16L:8D light regime. They were maintained in 9 cm diameter Petri dishes, the interior of which had been previously scraped with a coarse scouring pad, giving a roughened surface to facilitate easy movement. *Aphis fabae*, and *A.*

*pisum* (Hemiptera: Aphididae) colonies were reared separately on broad bean plants (*Vicia faba* L., cultivar Witkiem) in the lab ( $20\pm 2.0$  °C) under a constant light source. Ladybirds were fed aphids collected from the host plant daily, without plant material, which causes condensation to accumulate in Petri dishes (cf. Majerus et al. 1989).

*Care Prior to Reflex Bleeding.* The progression of the experiment is shown in Fig. 1. Ladybirds were immobilized using a flow of carbon dioxide and sexed under a dissecting microscope using the criteria of Randall et al. (1992). They were placed in single-sex Petri dishes with a density of approximately ten ladybirds per dish. Each dish was replaced daily, and the ladybirds were fed with an excess of aphids without plant material, either *A. pisum* or *A. fabae*. On the second day of feeding, females and males were paired in a 5.5 cm diameter Petri dish, roughened as described previously, under a light source for two hours with an excess of aphids. The pairs were maintained in the Petri dish after mating, and only pairs that copulated, and thus were able to lay fertile eggs, were used in the subsequent experiment.

*Reflex Bleeding.* All adult *A. bipunctata* were reflex bled on the sixth day of the experiment, based on the assumption that new alkaloid would be synthesized after alkaloid loss. Reflex bleeding is also expected to minimize the starting variation in alkaloid quantity that would be found in untreated ladybirds as a consequence of natural variation and possible prior reflex bleeding. The methodology of stimulating reflex bleeding was modified from de Jong et al. (1991). Ladybirds were fixed by taping the elytra on to sample slides (Knapp et al. 2018). All the six femora and sides of the pronotum were squeezed clockwise with forceps until the secretion ceased. The reflex blood was removed using filter paper. This method maximized the excretion of reflex blood from the ladybird and ensured that all ladybirds were in a comparable baseline state at the beginning of the experiment.

*Collection of Sample.* Six or seven pairs of ladybirds were frozen for analysis directly after reflex bleeding and also after 1, 3, 5, 8, and 12 days. On each occasion, each individual was

separately weighed inside a 5.5 cm diameter Petri dish, using a Satorius CPA225D Semi Microbalance (precision of 0.01 mg). All ladybird samples were transferred into separate 1.2 mL glass test tubes held inside a 2.0 mL Eppendorf safe-lock tube and stored at -80 °C.

The remaining dishes were inspected daily for dead ladybirds and the presence of eggs. Dishes were replaced, and the ladybirds were provided with fresh aphids. The numbers of eggs were recorded. Each egg cluster with greater than 25 eggs, was weighed using a Mettler Toledo Balance XS205 with precision of 0.01 mg. Each cluster of <25 eggs was combined with eggs from a neighboring day from the same female, because small numbers of eggs are difficult to weigh accurately. These pooled samples were allocated to the day from which the larger number of eggs came in subsequent statistical analysis. Females that laid <25 eggs over more than two days were excluded from the analysis. The collected eggs were stored in a freezer at -25 °C. The difference in the temperature from the storage of the adult samples was for space reasons, and is not expected to affect the amount of the alkaloid recovered.

*Alkaloid Extraction.* The extraction of alkaloids from the adult ladybird samples was conducted as follows; 200 µL of methanol was pipetted into a 1.2 mL test tube with each ladybird and 5 µL of a 10 mg/mL nicotine solution was added as an internal standard. Extraction of egg samples followed the same procedure with 100 µL of methanol and 5 µL of a 2 mg/mL nicotine solution added to a single clutch of eggs. The samples were crushed and the solution with the remains was left for 15 min to extract the maximum amount of alkaloid into the solvent. The test tube was placed inside a 2.0 mL Eppendorf Safe-lock tube and centrifuged with an Eppendorf 5424 microcentrifuge for 5 minutes at 15,000 rcf at room temperature. The supernatant was transferred into a new glass tube and the undissolved parts were discarded. The methanolic solution was dried with nitrogen gas to remove the methanol and redissolved in 100 µL of chloroform for adult ladybird samples and 50 µL for eggs. It was shaken until everything had dissolved. The solution, containing the extracted alkaloids, was subsequently



transferred into GC-MS vials with a 150  $\mu\text{L}$  glass low volume insert and stored at  $-80\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  if GC-MS was not carried out immediately.

*Quantitative Analysis.* The analysis of 1  $\mu\text{L}$  chloroform containing the alkaloid extracts was performed using a Shimadzu GC-2010 Plus gas chromatograph with an AOC-20i autoinjector. The column injection was performed using an OPTIC-4 Multi Inlet System. The GC column was a SH-Rxi-5ms (30m length; 0.25 mm inner diameter; 0.25  $\mu\text{m}$  film thickness). The GC was coupled to a 2010 Ultra Mass Spectrometer. The carrier gas helium flow was at a constant rate of  $1.05\text{ mL min}^{-1}$ . Mass spectra were recorded with an EIMS (70 eV). The injection temperature was  $50\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  rising to  $200\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  at  $5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{sec}$ . This was found to minimize the degradation of adalinine. The GC program was held at  $50\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 30 sec, then increased to  $170\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  at  $20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$ , then to  $290\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  at  $10\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$  and a final increase to  $325\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  at  $20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$ , and the final temperature was held for 3 min.

The alkaloids and standard were identified by comparison to published mass spectra (Lognay et al. 1996; Hautier et al. 2008) or by injection of the pure compound (nicotine). Retention times were approximately 8.66 min for nicotine, 12.53 min for adaline and 13.30 min for (undegraded) adalinine. The amount of alkaloid in samples was calculated by comparison of the area of the alkaloid peaks to the nicotine peak as mg nicotine equivalents (see Supplementary Table S1 and S2). Results are given per mg wet mass. Even with precise adjustment on the GC-MS to control the injection temperature to achieve only minimal degradation of adaline, both analysis on adults and eggs showed a very small amount of adaline degradation (RT = 10.90 min) as in other studies (cf. Hautier et al. 2008). This was nonetheless an exceedingly small amount, at the limits of detection and was thus not quantified. The proportion of degraded adalinine (RT = 14.49 min) was much higher: it significantly correlated with the undegraded adalinine (Fig. S1a, b). Thus, both degraded and undegraded adalinine were combined for the rest of the analysis. It is worth noting that our allocations of peaks to

undegraded and degraded adalinine were based on mass spectra and might potentially be reversed; however this does not affect our results due to the two being combined. Between the two analyzed alkaloids, adalinine and adaline show a significant positive correlation (Fig. S1c, d). Both alkaloids were combined for the rest of the alkaloid analysis, labelled as 'total alkaloid' in the results. Data for individual alkaloids is provided in the electronic supplementary material (Fig. S2 to S4).

*Data Analysis.* Alkaloid concentrations ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$  wet mass) were calculated by dividing alkaloid calculated in each sample (see above) by the sample mass. This measure, also used by some other authors (e.g. de Jong et al. 1991; Wheeler et al. 2015) and which accounts for variation in body mass, gives the best measure of defensive capability, as alkaloid concentration in the body or reflex blood determines deterrent capability (cf. Pasteels et al. 1973). Comparative analysis was conducted differentiating diets and sexes of ladybirds. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to investigate the reaccumulation of alkaloid as a function of both diet and sex using time as a covariate. Similar analyses testing reaccumulation as a function of diet were done for eggs. Levene's test was conducted to check for equality of variances. To further examine the relationship between diet/sex and alkaloid recovery rate, individual Pearson correlations were calculated for adults and eggs. In addition, a Pearson test for the correlation of the two endogenous synthesized major and minor alkaloids, adaline and adalinine was also performed. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 25.0 and R version 3.4.2 (R Core Team 2013).

Daily oviposition rate was calculated as the total number of eggs laid by each female divided by the number of days she was alive in the experiment. Both this and egg mass between diets were analyzed using a one-tailed Mann-Whitney U-test, with alternative hypotheses based on prior literature (Blackman 1967) that *A. fabae* fed ladybirds would lay fewer smaller eggs.

## RESULTS

*Effect of Diet on Adult Alkaloid Level.* Measure of alkaloid reaccumulation in adult ladybirds on the two aphid diets (Fig. 2) showed that the total alkaloid reaccumulation for adult *A. bipunctata* was affected significantly for both the interactive term Diet\*Time and Sex\*Time, indicating that reaccumulation rate differed with Diet and Sex (Table 1). The rate was lower for ladybirds fed on the lower quality *A. fabae* and for female than males: correlations with time were also weaker for females and on *A. fabae* diets (Fig. 2). Females generally had a higher concentration of alkaloid than males (fixed term Sex) but the term Diet was not significant, possibly because reflex bled ladybirds in both dietary treatments started with similarly low alkaloid levels. Results for each of the individual alkaloids adaline and adalinine, were similar, except that Sex\*Time was not significant for adaline (Table S3, Fig. S2 to S4).

*Effect of Diet on Egg Production and Alkaloid Levels.* When female two-spotted ladybird were fed with *A. fabae*, the oviposition rate per day was lower than when fed *A. pisum* (Fig. 3a; Mann-Whitney U test:  $U = 402$ ,  $P = 0.049$ ), consistent with earlier studies (El-Hariri 1966b; Rana et al. 2002). No effect was observed on the weight of the eggs (Fig. 3b;  $t = 1.547$ ,  $df = 40$ ,  $P = 0.13$ ), although this has been observed previously (Blackman 1967).

In an ANCOVA there was no significant effect of Diet\*Time for total alkaloid (Table 2), adaline or adalinine (Table S4). In individual correlations, a positive but weak relationship between alkaloid concentration and time since reflex bleeding was observed for eggs of *A. pisum* fed ladybirds for total alkaloid and adaline but not adalinine (Fig. 4, Fig. S4a). There was no correlation for eggs of *A. fabae* fed ladybirds for any alkaloid measure (Fig. S4b).

## DISCUSSION

After reflex bleeding, alkaloids reaccumulated in ladybirds more slowly when they were fed *A. fabae* than when they were fed *A. pisum*. Thus, synthesis of alkaloids in *A. bipunctata* was dependent on dietary quality, both directly, via food content, and because the adult ladybirds could eat fewer of the less palatable *A. fabae* (Blackman 1967), although they

clearly do eat sufficient to sustain reproduction. It is worth noting that this dietary effect exists irrespective of the reasons for alkaloid synthesis. We frame the subsequent discussion in terms of recovery, i.e. alkaloid increase, after reflex bleeding, although potentially alkaloid might have increased in the two groups over time irrespective of this. Given earlier studies (e.g., de Jong et al. 1991), however, it does not seem much more likely that the documented increase arose primarily as a result of prior alkaloid depletion.

This relationship between the quality of the fed aphids and the amount of the synthesized alkaloids can be explained through the synthesis of defensive chemicals, for which the energy from food is needed. Previous research has emphasized an integral role for fatty acids as precursors involved in the synthesis of ladybird alkaloids, including adaline (Attygalle et al. 1994; Laurent et al. 2002; Haulotte et al. 2012). Given their importance, a link is to be expected to the level of fat reserves in the beetle: alkaloid synthetic rate could decline with a reduction in *A. bipunctata* fat reserves, which are lower with an *A. fabae* diet (El-Hariri 1966a). Other nutritional factors may also contribute: for example, the amino acid glutamine is suggested to play significant role in adaline synthesis (Laurent et al. 2002).

Interestingly males accumulated alkaloid faster than the female ladybirds, and the effect was stronger, although female *A. bipunctata*, like other ladybirds, synthesize a greater volume of alkaloids than the males (de Jong et al. 1991). However, females allocate a considerable proportion of the alkaloid they synthesize to eggs, which likely explains the lower reaccumulation rate in females and lower correlations with time. No consistent effects on the alkaloid investment in eggs by females between the different diets were observed, although there was limited evidence for a weak increase in alkaloid investment over time on the higher quality diet. Possibly, because alkaloid reaccumulated in *A. pisum*-fed females faster this allowed them to allocate slightly more alkaloid to eggs in the later stages of the experiment. Absence of an effect on the allocation of alkaloids in the egg from diet and level of

reaccumulation could possibly be due to allocation of the alkaloids in the eggs being kept constant by the female, ensuring that eggs receive consistent levels of protection. However, study by Kajita et al. (2010) showed the amount of alkaloids across egg clutches significantly varied, and was not constant.

Assuming that our results do represent alkaloid reaccumulation after reflex bleeding, which is supported by other studies (de Jong et al. 1991), it is notable that all alkaloid reaccumulation periods were exceedingly long with both treatments, even the high quality one: in our study they were still increasing even after 12 days. This is consistent with the synthesis of autogenously produced chemical defenses in some other animals (Rossini et al. 1997; Jared et al. 2014), although it can be faster (Heethoff 2012). Although the long recovery time can partly be explained by us having reflex bled our ladybirds to exhaustion, it still seems likely that the recovery period can run to days, given that ladybirds could produce quite large quantities of reflex fluid during reflex bleeding (Holloway et al. 1993).

Studies of chemically defended organisms often rely on single measures to quantify defense levels, usually at peak strength. This has been true for studies testing whether interspecific variation in color pattern and quantitative aspects of chemical defense are linked (Speed et al. 2012). Our study suggests that this approach is unrealistic as it fails to capture a vast amount of variation that can occur even within individuals over time. As reflex bleeding itself can lead to differing levels of chemical defense and long recovery times after alkaloid use, this mechanism only increases the differences between individuals over time. Although individuals of generalist species, such as *A. bipunctata* consume only a few species of aphids in their lives, the potential prey of such species extends to hundreds of different aphids which vary in quality (Majerus 1994; Hodek and Evans 2012) exerting a further substantial intraspecific effect on the amount of ladybirds alkaloid. For ladybirds these effects potentially undermine studies linking color pattern, which does not change over time (except with age:

Majerus 1994), to defense levels, which clearly do. Any correlation detected in laboratory studies with single measurements of defense levels may be drowned out by environmental variation in the field. Similar effects to those we observed here undoubtedly occur in other chemically defended organisms, suggesting that a more temporally dynamic view is needed to better understand the functioning of chemical defense under natural conditions (Brückner and Heethoff 2018). This needs to reflect that many defenses temporarily decline with use and may increase again slowly and heterogeneously across individuals due to factors such as diet, as has been shown here, and potentially other environmental factors such as temperature (Steele et al. 2020a).

Our findings on differences in reaccumulation of alkaloid in relation to quality of diet in the two-spotted ladybird adds to our understanding of alkaloid synthesis in ladybirds, and suggests that the level of chemical defense in ladybirds are much more dynamic than had previously been considered. In the context of this work, how diet and alkaloids are mechanistically linked and a detailed understanding of allocation of alkaloid investment between the eggs and females remain to be studied. Our broader findings on this ladybird, are without doubt applicable to many other chemically defended organisms that synthesize their own toxins, indicating that a more dynamic approach is needed across a wide diversity of studies of chemical defense.

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## Figures

**Fig. 1** Experimental scheme of care prior to sample collection for analysis. Adult *A. bipunctata* was obtained on the starting day and fed for two days. On the second day of feeding, females and males were paired, only copulated pairs were used in the experiment. All individuals were reflex bled on the sixth day of the experiment. Pairs of ladybirds were frozen for analysis directly after reflex bleeding and also after 1, 3, 5, 8, and 12 days.

**Fig. 2** Mean  $\pm$ SE of alkaloid concentration in *A. bipunctata* over 12 days after reflex bleeding for male (a) and female (b) adult ladybirds. For each sampling day and treatment 6 or 7 pairs were analyzed. Units are  $\mu\text{g}$  nicotine equivalent/mg wet mass ladybirds. Pearson Correlation Analysis: (a) *A. pisum* -  $r^2 = 0.28$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ; *A. fabae* -  $r^2 = 0.20$ ,  $n = 39$ ,  $P = 0.004$ . (b) *A. pisum* -  $r^2 = 0.10$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $P = 0.006$ ; *A. fabae* -  $r^2 = 0.03$ ,  $n = 39$ ,  $P = 0.32$ . Data for each diet are offset horizontally to facilitate interpretation of error bars.

**Fig. 3** Reproductive parameters of females fed on two aphid diets. (a) Mean  $\pm$ SE daily oviposition rate by each female. For *A. pisum*  $n = 32$ , and *A. fabae*  $n = 33$ .  $*P < 0.05$ . Numbers are lower than the Figure 2 as the ladybirds were killed on day 0, could not lay any eggs. (b) Average weight of individual eggs laid by each female. For *A. pisum*  $n = 20$  and *A. fabae*  $n = 22$ .

**Fig. 4** Mean  $\pm$ SE of alkaloid concentration in eggs over 12 days after reflex bleeding of females. For each day and diet the number of samples is between 25 and 66. Units are  $\mu\text{g}$  nicotine equivalent/mg wet mass of eggs. Pearson Correlation Analysis: *A. pisum* -  $r^2 = 0.061$ ,  $n = 72$ ,  $P = 0.036$ ; *A. fabae* -  $r^2 = 0.20$ ,  $n = 59$ ,  $P = 0.29$ . Data for each diet are offset horizontally to facilitate interpretation of error bars.

Tables

**Table 1** Results of an ANCOVA analysis on total alkaloid concentration in adult *A. bipunctata*, with fixed effects Diet and Sex and covariate Time since reflex bleeding

Fixed Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Diet	1	0.499	0.481
Sex	1	9.486	<b>0.002</b>
Diet*Sex	1	0.209	0.648
Diet*Time	1	5.015	<b>0.027</b>
Sex*Time	1	4.298	<b>0.040</b>
Diet*Sex*Time	1	1.056	0.306

*Bold letters indicate a significance of ( $P < 0.05$ ). Number of analyzed adult pairs of each aphid diet: A. pisum -  $n = 38$ ; A. fabae -  $n = 39$ .  $N = 154$ .*

**Table 2** Results of an ANCOVA analysis on egg total alkaloid concentration in adult *A. bipunctata*, with fixed effect Diet and covariate Time since female reflex bleeding

Fixed Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Diet	1	0.583	0.446
Diet*Time	1	1.162	0.283

*Number of analyzed egg samples from each female aphid diet: A. pisum - n = 72; A. fabae - n = 59. N = 131.*

**Figure 1:**

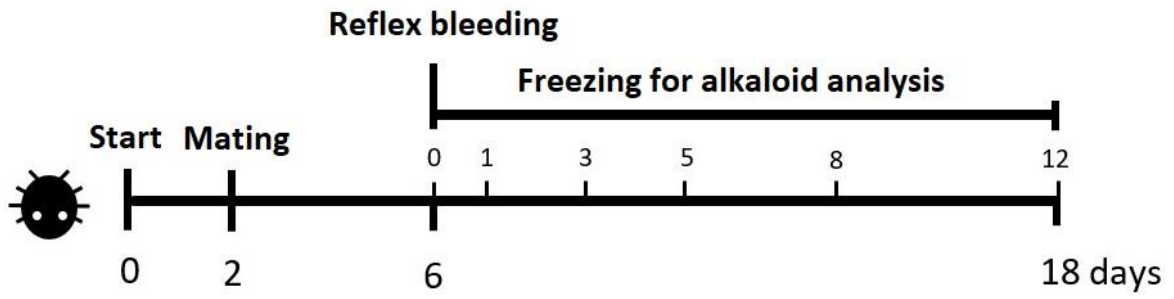
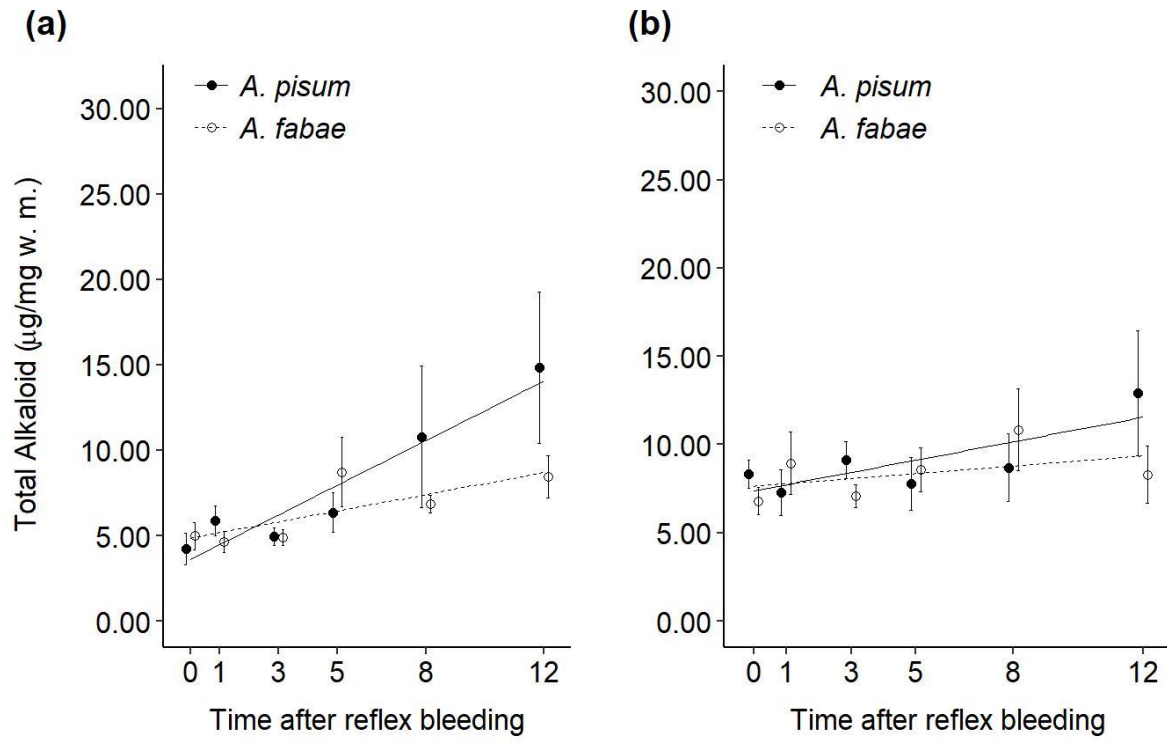
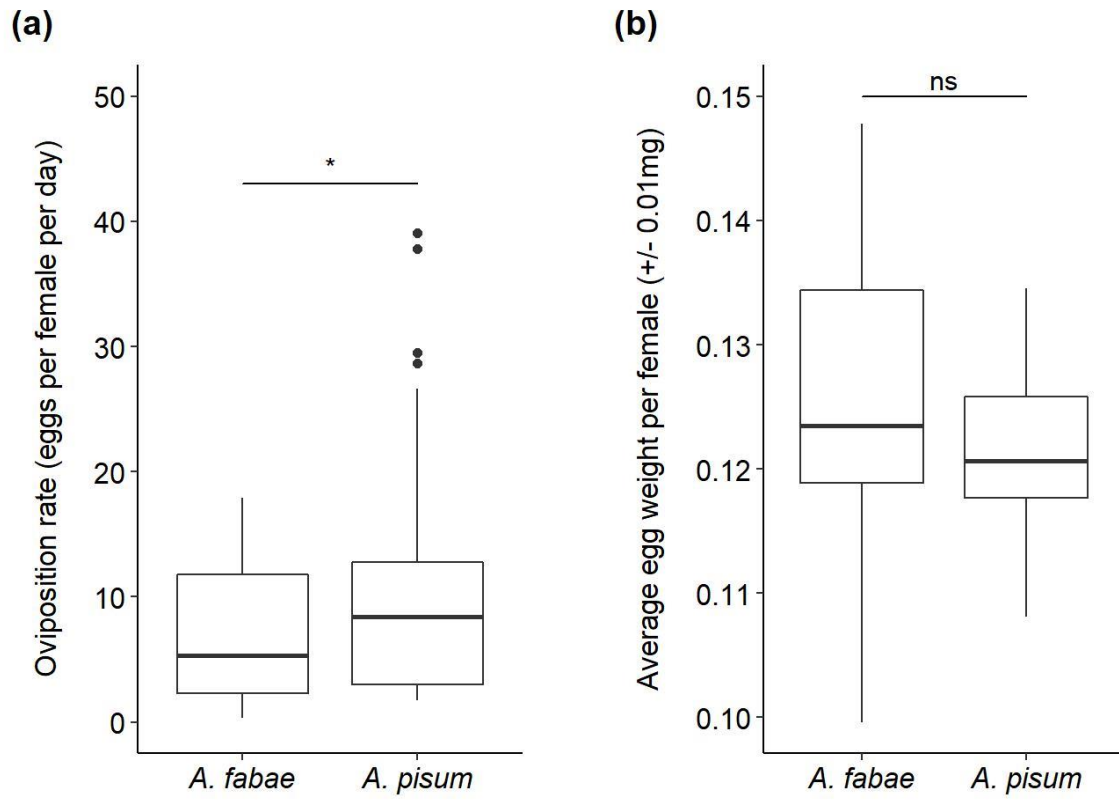


Figure 2:

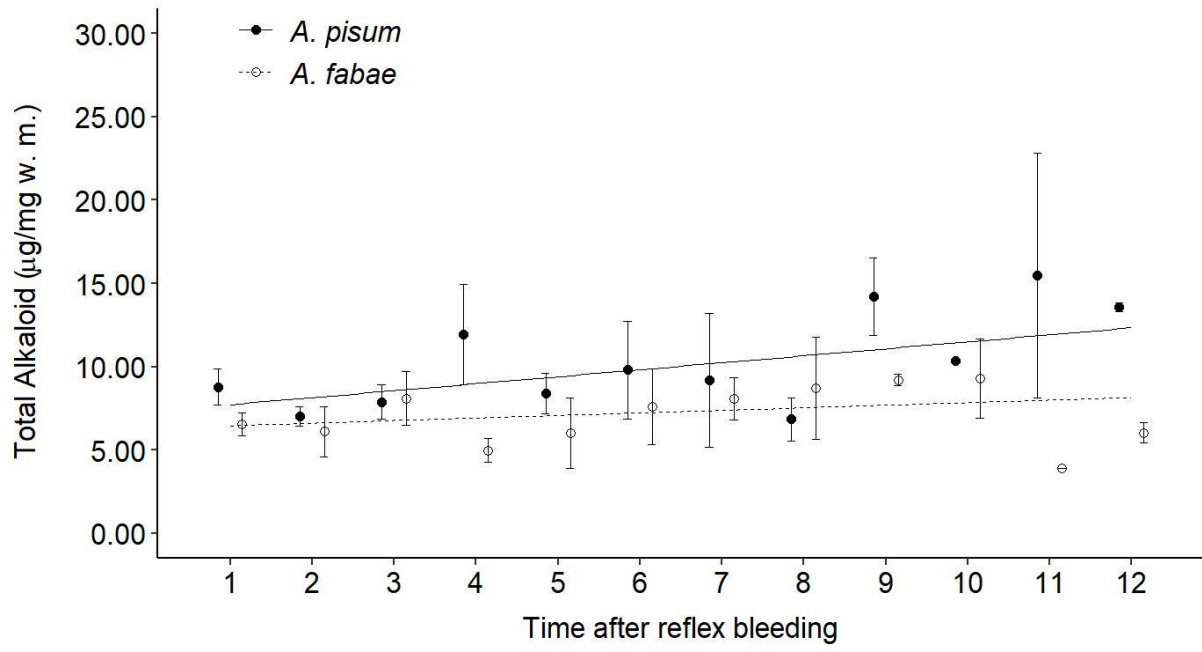


**Figure 3:**





**Figure 4:**



**ELECTRONIC SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL EXCEL FILE**

**TITLE** HOW DIET LEADS TO DEFENSIVE DYNAMISM: EFFECT OF THE DIETARY QUALITY ON AUTOGENOUS ALKALOIDS RECOVERY RATE IN A CHEMICALLY DEFENDED BEETLE  
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**TABLES**  
**Table S1** Conversion dataset for calculating alkaloid concentration in ladybird  
**Table S2** Conversion dataset for calculating alkaloid concentration in eggs



<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	4	12	0.01248	12.48	2274306	6525319	772783	483304	11495	1.361	0.851	2.213	13.708
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	5	0	0.0073	7.3	5034595	2356827	584709	330002	3.206	0.795	0.449	1.244	4.451
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	5	1	0.01115	11.15	5487214	5833282	573295	269092	4.767	0.469	0.220	0.688	5.456
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	5	3	0.0092	9.2	5094421	5165290	216507	184360	5.510	0.231	0.197	0.428	5.938
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	5	5	0.01159	11.59	1396052	5232437	332059	238916	16.169	1.026	0.738	1.764	17.934
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	5	8	0.00872	8.72	4405598	4138131	360556	205807	5.386	0.469	0.268	0.737	6.123
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	5	12	0.01056	10.56	2666920	4070443	319404	237389	7.227	0.567	0.421	0.989	8.215
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	6	0	0.01369	13.69	6421342	7166531	313358	218683	4.076	0.178	0.124	0.303	4.379
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	6	1	0.01258	12.58	3875669	6369780	208466	146429	6.532	0.214	0.150	0.364	6.896
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	6	3	0.01151	11.51	5299704	3685300	210824	198680	3.021	0.173	0.163	0.336	3.356
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	6	5	0.00962	9.62	2305796	2965470	397263	265318	6.684	0.895	0.598	1.494	8.178
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	6	8	0.00965	9.65	2954823	3808326	253375	227952	6.678	0.444	0.400	0.844	7.522
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	6	12	0.01165	11.65	2353986	5463992	279002	172479	9.962	0.509	0.314	0.823	10.785
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	7	0	0.00917	9.17	5625536	3167420	233443	146939	3.070	0.226	0.142	0.369	3.439
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	7	3	0.00776	7.76	5624693	3357070	383149	188624	3.846	0.439	0.216	0.655	4.501
<i>A. fabae</i>	Male	7	12	0.01372	13.72	2045087	4852449	543986	254364	8.647	0.969	0.453	1.423	10.070



<i>A. pisum</i>	7	31	0.00383	3.830	0.124	2421107	3689226	157576	128305	3.979	0.170	0.138	0.308	4.287
<i>A. pisum</i>	7	29	0.00338	3.380	0.117	6990289	12230327	751231	440505	5.176	0.318	0.186	0.504	5.681
<i>A. pisum</i>	7	28	0.00340	3.400	0.121	5753874	8894517	405030	265319	4.547	0.207	0.136	0.343	4.889
<i>A. pisum</i>	7	30	0.00381	3.810	0.127	1612563	14036978	925422	562811	22.847	1.506	0.916	2.422	25.269
<i>A. pisum</i>	7	44	0.00539	5.390	0.123	8225628	24264885	1056296	640827	5.473	0.238	0.145	0.383	5.856
<i>A. pisum</i>	8	66	0.00815	8.150	0.123	2743185	8704097	426473	299186	3.893	0.191	0.134	0.325	4.218
<i>A. pisum</i>	8	28	0.00316	3.160	0.113	5602835	12360580	691401	431012	6.981	0.391	0.243	0.634	7.615
<i>A. pisum</i>	8	30	0.00341	3.410	0.114	6248086	10933067	454706	295105	5.131	0.213	0.139	0.352	5.483
<i>A. pisum</i>	8	28	0.00326	3.260	0.116	2490480	7593512	355148	231634	9.353	0.437	0.285	0.723	10.076
<i>A. pisum</i>	9	41	0.00455	4.550	0.111	2370858	16111553	1063508	648223	14.936	0.986	0.601	1.587	16.522
<i>A. pisum</i>	9	30	0.00354	3.540	0.118	1984474	7718347	373816	264357	10.987	0.532	0.376	0.908	11.895
<i>A. pisum</i>	10	26	0.00311	3.110	0.120	2991732	8955018	446703	239508	9.625	0.480	0.257	0.738	10.362
<i>A. pisum</i>	11	35	0.00425	4.250	0.121	1585970	13979640	855329	557479	20.740	1.269	0.827	2.096	22.836
<i>A. pisum</i>	11	25	0.00245	2.450	0.098	5166024	9690303	401267	195293	7.656	0.317	0.154	0.471	8.128
<i>A. pisum</i>	12	36	0.00436	4.360	0.121	3550269	18703572	1169726	707107	12.083	0.756	0.457	1.212	13.296
<i>A. pisum</i>	12	27	0.00300	3.000	0.111	2394790	9279310	443166	231452	12.916	0.617	0.322	0.939	13.855

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION: HOW DIET LEADS TO DEFENSIVE DYNAMISM:  
EFFECT OF THE DIETARY QUALITY ON AUTOGENOUS ALKALOIDS RECOVERY  
RATE IN A CHEMICALLY DEFENDED BEETLE**

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## Table S1 and S2

Electronic Supplementary Material Excel file (Tables S1, S2)

**Table S3** Results of two-way ANCOVA analyses on the concentrations of individual alkaloids extracted from adult *A. bipunctata* after reflex bleeding

Dependent Variable	Fixed Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Adaline	Diet	1	0.334	0.564
	Sex	1	11.059	<b>0.001</b>
	Diet*Sex	1	0.281	0.597
	Diet*Time	1	4.162	<b>0.043</b>
	Sex*Time	1	3.423	0.066
	Diet*Sex*Time	1	0.721	0.397
Adalinine	Diet	1	1.804	0.181
	Sex	1	1.511	0.221
	Diet*Sex	1	0.001	0.980
	Diet*Time	1	9.378	<b>0.003</b>
	Sex*Time	1	9.341	<b>0.003</b>
	Diet*Sex*Time	1	3.364	0.059

*Bold letters indicate a significance of ( $P < 0.05$ ). Number of analyzed adult pairs of each aphid diet: *A. pisum* -  $n = 38$ ; *A. fabae* -  $n = 39$ .  $N = 154$ .*



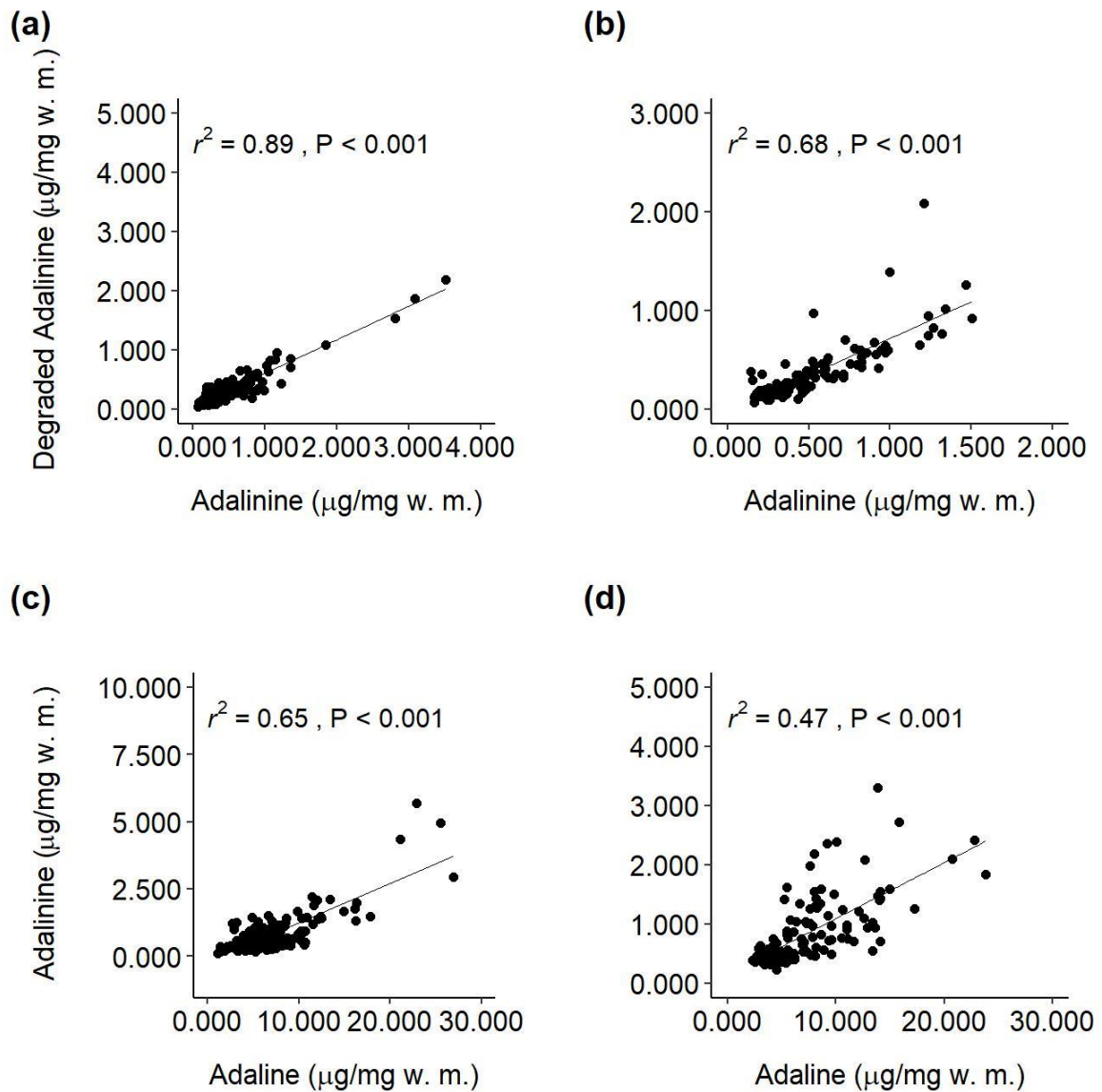
**Table S4** Results of two-way ANCOVA analyses on the concentrations of individual alkaloids extracted from adult *A. bipunctata* eggs after reflex bleeding

Dependent Variable	Fixed Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Adaline	Diet	1	1.042	0.309
	Diet*Time	1	1.288	0.258
Adalinine	Diet	1	1.367	0.245
	Diet*Time	1	0.201	0.654

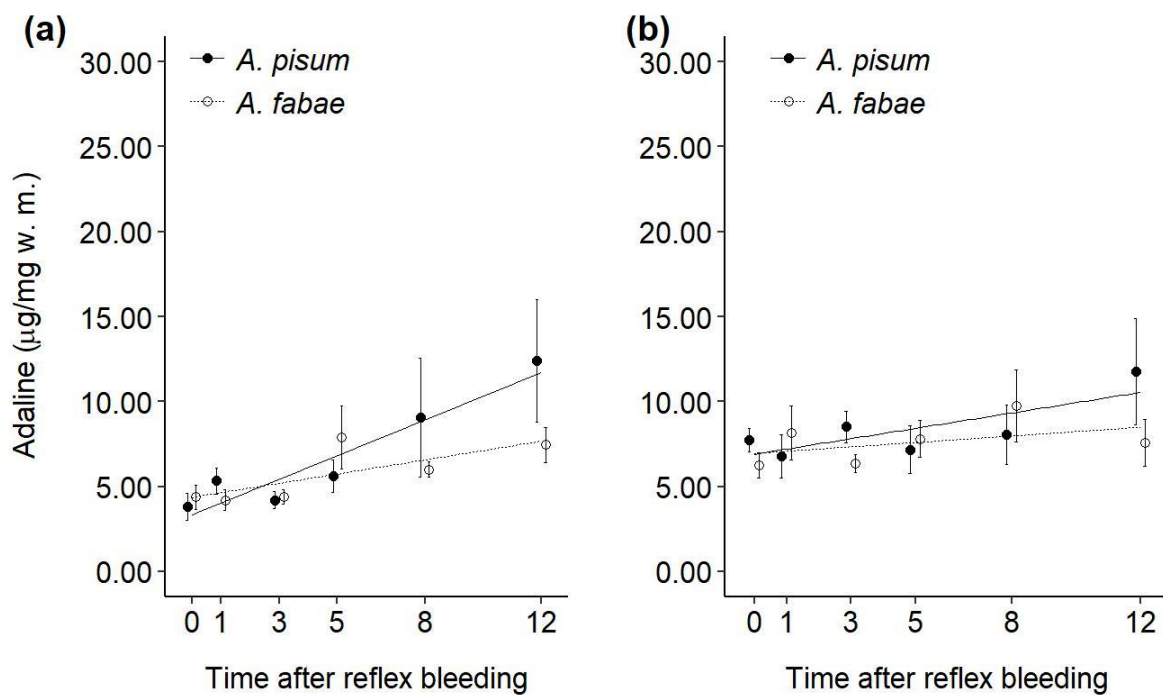
*Number of analyzed egg samples from each female aphid diet: A. pisum - n = 72; A. fabae - n = 59. N = 131.*

Figures

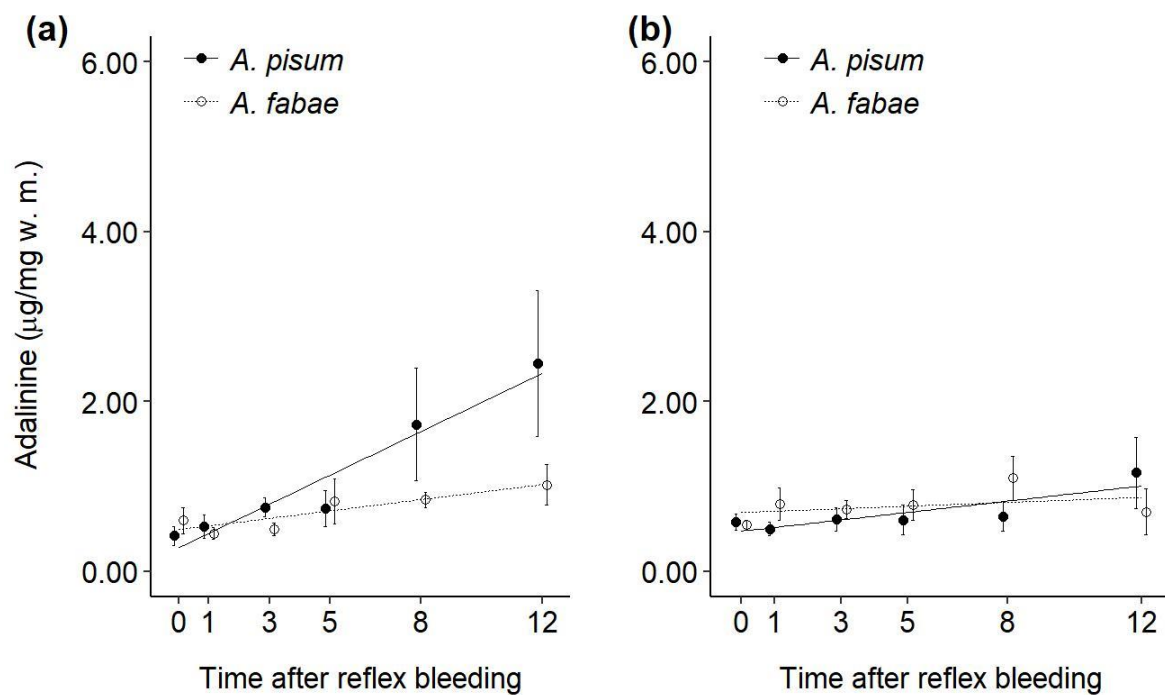
**Fig. S1** Scatter graphs of Pearson Correlations between analyzed alkaloid content. Undegraded and degraded adalinine for adults (a), and eggs (b). Adaline and adalinine (combination with degraded adalinine) alkaloids of adult (c), and eggs (d). Units  $\mu\text{g}$  nicotine equivalent/mg wet mass ladybirds. Adult  $N = 154$  individuals, Eggs  $N = 131$  samples



**Fig. S2** Mean  $\pm$ SE of adaline concentration (re)accumulation of adult *A. bipunctata* over 12 days after reflex bleeding for male (a) and female (b) adult ladybirds with different aphid diets (*A. fabae* and *A. pisum*). Unit  $\mu\text{g}$  nicotine equivalent/mg wet mass ladybirds. For each sampling day and treatment 6 or 7 pairs were analyzed. Pearson Correlation Analysis: Male - *A. pisum*,  $r^2 = 0.26$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ; *A. fabae*,  $r^2 = 0.19$ ,  $n = 39$ ,  $P = 0.0058$ ; Female - *A. pisum*,  $r^2 = 0.091$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $P = 0.066$ ; *A. fabae*,  $r^2 = 0.28$ ,  $n = 39$ ,  $P = 0.31$ . Data for each diet are offset horizontally to facilitate interpretation of error bars



**Fig. S3** Mean  $\pm$ SE of adalinine concentration (re)accumulation of adult *A. bipunctata* over 12 days after reflex bleeding for male (a) and female (b) adult ladybirds with different aphid diets (*A. fabae* and *A. pisum*). Unit  $\mu\text{g}$  nicotine equivalent/mg wet mass ladybirds. For each sampling day and treatment 6 or 7 pairs were analyzed. Pearson Correlation Analysis: Male - *A. pisum*,  $r^2 = 0.32$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ; *A. fabae*,  $r^2 = 0.18$ ,  $n = 39$ ,  $P = 0.0078$ ; Female - *A. pisum*,  $r^2 = 0.12$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $P = 0.030$ ; *A. fabae*,  $r^2 = 0.017$ ,  $n = 39$ ,  $P = 0.42$ . Data for each diet are offset horizontally to facilitate interpretation of error bars



**Fig. S4** Mean  $\pm$ SE of individual alkaloid concentration in eggs over 12 days after reflex bleeding of females. Unit  $\mu\text{g}$  nicotine equivalent/mg wet mass ladybirds. (a) Adaline, (b) Adalinine. *A. pisum*;  $n = 72$ , *A. fabae*;  $n = 59$ . Pearson Correlation Analysis: Adaline - *A. pisum*,  $r^2 = 0.065$ ,  $P = 0.030$ ; *A. fabae*,  $r^2 = 0.022$ ,  $P = 0.26$ ; Adalinine - *A. pisum*,  $r^2 = 0.019$ ,  $P = 0.25$ ; *A. fabae*,  $r^2 = 0.0038$ ,  $P = 0.64$ . Data for each diet are offset horizontally to facilitate interpretation of error bars

