

D-limonene and β -ocimene Attract *Aphytis melinus* to Increase Parasitism of California Red Scale *Aonidiella aurantii* (Hemiptera: Aphididae) on Citrus [†]

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Abstract: Under field conditions, the natural enemies' effectiveness in controlling pests is largely correlated with their capability to spread towards infested crops. We previously reported that *Aphytis melinus* (Hymenoptera: Aphelinidae), a parasitoid of California red scale *Aonidiella aurantii* (Maskell) (Hemiptera: Diaspididae), was attracted to volatiles from citrus fruit infested with *A. aurantii* and that d-limonene and β -ocimene *A. aurantii*-induced plant volatiles were responsible for this attraction. In this study, d-limonene and β -ocimene were examined for their attractiveness to *A. aurantii* parasitoid *Aphytis melinus* in the field after augmentative releases. Both were mixed with paraffin oil for slow release in field experiments to control the population density of *A. aurantii* by enhancing their natural enemies. The experiment was conducted in 2018 at Murdoch citrus orchard. A total of 10,000 *A. melinus* adults were released in different spots of the citrus orchard. The spread of the parasitoid was evaluated, for three months after the release, using yellow sticky traps activated with both of d-limonene and β -ocimene and by monitoring the percentage parasitism of the scale on citrus fruit. Field experiments demonstrated that lures baited with isolates of d-limonene and/or β -ocimene, which significantly attracted some species of natural enemies but had no significant impact on other recruitments. The number of *A. melinus* captured during the whole trial was greater in the traps treated with volatiles than the control. Finally, we determined that overall parasitism rates were not increased by synthetic HIPV lures but found evidence that lures may increase parasitism of *A. aurantii* when there is a decrease in the amount of volatile organic compounds due to lack of healthy and infested fruit.

Keywords: d-limonene; β -ocimene; California red scale; *Aphytis melinus*; herbivore-induced plant volatile; conservation biological control

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1. Introduction

California red scale, *Aonidiella aurantii* (Maskell) (Hemiptera: Diaspididae), is one of the most important pests of citrus worldwide [1]. Within Australia, *A. aurantii* is a major pest of citrus in the citrus producing regions of Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, and inland New South Wales [2]. *Aphytis melinus* is an important agent in controlling *A. aurantii* [3] utilising augmentative releases [4]. When the aim of mass release is a quick effect of natural enemies rather than their establishment, natural enemies must move from the release points and spread throughout the infested area [5]. The capacity of natural enemies to spread within infested crops is mostly the most important factor in controlling pests in the field conditions [6]. Therefore, the dispersal and host-location behaviour of wasps, especially released ones, are factors that clearly influence the efficiency of biological control [7, 8].

Herbivore-induced-plant-volatiles (HIPVs) constitute one particular group of allelochemicals, and these volatiles are composed of many organic compounds that are released when plants become infested by herbivorous insects [9,10,11,12]. HIPVs are involved in plant communication with natural enemies of the insect herbivores through the attraction of natural enemies and the repulsion of herbivores [13, 14]. It has long been expected that manipulation of HIPVs in synthetic or natural form can be used to attract and increase populations of natural enemies within their hosts or preys population or repel pests from crop plants [15, 16].

To reduce reliance on pesticide use as an urgent need for sustainable agricultural methods, more studies are focusing on the ecological effect of Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) released by plants on herbivores [17, 18]. Direct evidence for the potential of synthetic plant volatiles as field attractants for beneficial insects was investigated [19, 20]. Essential oils, as a natural emission from plants, do not pose the toxicity problems of pesticides to animals and the environment [21, 22]. Plant volatiles can be considered as potential reliable green chemicals for repelling pests and attracting natural enemies of these pests. Their long-distance effects and easy production and manipulation make these molecules excellent prospects for use with crops by spraying or mixing with a slow-releasing carrier to repel insect feeding or ovipositing from host plants and guide them to non-hosts [23, 24].

d-limonene and β -ocimene are monoterpenes found within a variety of plants and fruits. d-limonene and β -ocimene are the main terpene compounds found in citrus fruit peel [25, 11, 12]. The two compounds are both found in healthy fruit but are quantitatively elevated by insect herbivory, or mechanical injury of the fruit peel [25, 11, 12]. The elevated concentrations of the above two compounds in *A. aurantii* infested fruit [10, 11, 12] could be due to the feeding injury on the fruit rind caused by *A.aurantii*, which consequently attracts *A. melinus* females to their host. d-limonene is a major constituent in citrus oils (lemon, orange, mandarin, lime, and grapefruit) [26]. Despite the use of d-limonene as a repellent for many pests, especially in high concentration [27, 28], it is also considered as an attractant for many species of parasitoids [29, 30, 28, 11,12]. β -ocimene is considered one of the major compounds in citrus [31, 32, 11, 12]. β -ocimene, also emitted from plants, can serve as a chemical cue for the attraction of parasitoids or predators of plant herbivores [29, 33, 11,12]. Therefore, it could be further suggested that the production of d-limonene and β -ocimene in citrus is part of the indirect defence strategy against *A. aurantii* infestation by attracting its natural enemies. Thus, d-limonene and β -ocimene play a key role as long range attractants of *A. melinus* females to *A. aurantii* infested citrus fruit. This study aimed to evaluate the dispersal ability of released *A. melinus* adults and their effect on the parasitism percentage, using d-limonene and β -ocimene with yellow sticky traps and scoring parasitism on infested fruit. These methods have the advantage of providing both qualitative and quantitative data on the parasitoids' presence and distribution in space.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Insect releases

Parasitoid pupae used in the experiment, which were purchased from Biological Services Commercial Insectary (Adelaide, Australia), were maintained under laboratory conditions until adults emerged. Ten thousand parasitoid adults were released at many release points not exceeding five meters from the locations of the chemicals dispensers and equal to the number of them because low mobility of the wasps can reduce the spread, resulting in high levels of control close to the release point and decreasing effectiveness with distance, at least in the first few generations after the release [6]. This number of *A. melinus* adults is recommended by Biological Services (commercial insectary). The trial started on 6th September – in order to keep background parasitism by naturally occurring *A. melinus* low – when the parasitoid is scarce in the field [1] to synchronize with the

presence of virgin adult female *A. aurantii*, which is the preferred instar of the parasitoid [4]. The adult parasitoids released were less than 48 hours old, collected by using an insect aspirator vacuum and the number quantified based on estimation. They were then segmented, and groups of around 500 adults were placed in 20 ml vials. These were then carried to the field in a refrigerated box and attached to the mid of the trees 150–200 cm above the ground.

2.2. Attractants

Yellow sticky traps attract *A. melinus* adults [34, 3]. Besides, researchers indicate that *A. melinus* females are attracted to airborne cues from hosts, i.e. *A. aurantii* virgin females and host-infested fruit [35, 11,12]. Lures were developed for experiments to test the attraction of d-limonene and β -ocimene to arthropods in the field (d-limonene purity is 98% EE (GLC), which has been purchased from Sigma-Aldrich, and β -ocimene purity is $\geq 90\%$, which has been purchased from Toronto Research Chemicals) because of their large increase in herbivore-induced citrus trees volatiles compared to the healthy trees, which are commercial availability and low cost. d-limonene and β -ocimene lures were tested at the dosage of 20 μ l [12]. Yellow sticky traps (101 mm x 173 mm) that are often used to monitor insects in fields [36] were attached to orange trees and placed in the middle of the tree 150–200 cm above the ground. Every seven days, 20 μ l of d-limonene and β -ocimene solution formulated in paraffin oil (for slow release of the infochemical), as well paraffin oil as the control, were deposited on a 1-cm-diameter rubber septum dispensers that were placed on the top of the yellow sticky traps. The slow dispensers were first placed in the citrus orchard on 6th September. There were 13 weekly trapping periods, the first just before the release and the others over the following 84 days. Sticky traps and lures were replaced weekly between 13th September to 22nd November. Once collected, the old traps were placed inside transparent plastic bags and taken to the Murdoch University laboratory, where the numbers of *Aphytis* spp. adults and other natural enemies were counted under a stereomicroscope, and the abundance of each species was recorded (Table 1).

Aphytis spp. were ascribed to *A. melinus* because this is by far the most abundant species suited to temperate conditions [37] and because of the great numbers that were released. Four fruits per tree were randomly collected 150–200 cm above the ground every week on the same trees on which the traps were hung on in order to assess parasitism by *A. melinus* both in the trees treated by d-limonene and β -ocimene dispensers and in the trees treated by paraffin oil as a control. In the laboratory, the number of live and parasitised scales in these samples were scored.

2.3. Experimental design of a citrus orchard

This was conducted in an unsprayed experimental citrus orchard of Murdoch University located in WA (32.30°S 116.01°E 69m AMSL), Australia, during spring and early summer (September–November) 2018. The trees in the experimental field were 25-year-old orange trees (*C. sinensis* (L.)), which were planted in a 5 x 5 m grid. The trial was conducted in two 1-acre plots, about 500 m apart from each other. The trial consisted of three treatments in the citrus orchards: (1) only paraffin oil as the control; (2) β -ocimene release; and (3) d-limonene release, and the experiment was repeated twice to confirm the results. Single yellow trap sticks with the 1 cm diameter rubber septum were placed 20 m apart in a Latin square design with three replicates per treatment (12 dispensers and 12 traps total). No herbicides or insecticides were used in the entire experimental area. The temperature was obtained through the climate Data Online by the bureau of meteorology.

2.4. Statistical analyses

The estimated percentage of parasitism (EPP) was measured using the following formula:

$$EPP = 100 \times (N_p / N_I + N_p)$$

Here, N_p is the number of scale instars bearing *A. melinus*, and N_I is the number of live *A. aurantii* instars that are suitable hosts for this parasitoid. Population densities of the EPP, as well as the *A. melinus* captured, recorded in infested fruit and traps in trees treated with d-limonene and β -ocimene dispensers and trees treated with only paraffin oil dispensers as a control, were compared among the infochemical releaser tests using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Raw data that did not pass the Kolmogorov Smirnov test for normality and the Levene test for equality of variances was subjected to square-root transformation before being analysed followed by Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test. Correlation analysis was used to assess the relationship between the numbers of *A. melinus* captured and EPP during the whole trial (SPSS version 24.0, Chicago, IL, USA).

3. Results

3.1. The abundance of natural enemy adults

The main natural enemies of *A. aurantii* found in the trials in order of abundance were *Aphytis* spp., *Comperiella bifasciata*, *Rhizobius lophanthae* and *Mallada* spp. Based on the total number of natural enemy species attracted, d-limonene and β -ocimene attracted more than the control paraffin oil did (Table 1). Analyses conducted for three months (September, October, and November) revealed that significantly greater numbers of *Aphytis* spp. were trapped in the yellow sticky traps treated with d-limonene and β -ocimene dispensers than the traps treated with paraffin oil in October and November, while there was no significant difference observed in September. The number of *Mallada* spp. attracted to traps were significantly higher in October but not in September and November. There were no significant differences in the percentage of *Comperiella bifasciata* attraction towards traps despite the increase in the number of wasps oriented towards the traps treated with VOCs compared to those treated with just paraffin oil. *Rhizobius lophanthae* was significantly more numerous in the β -ocimene traps during September and October. Most of these species showed a trend of increasing abundance not only in the d-limonene and β -ocimene but also in the control area as the season progressed. *A. aurantii* natural enemies and their diversity are presented in Table 1.

3.2. *Aphytis melinus* captures

The total number of *A. melinus* captured by the yellow sticky traps positioned under rubber septums that contain d-limonene or β -ocimene was greater than the numbers captured by the traps under the rubber septums filled with only paraffin oil as a control (Figure 1). Significant differences in the weekly captures of *A. melinus* between d-limonene and β -ocimene on the one hand and the paraffin oil, on the other hand, were recorded in the fifth week after release (R + 35d) and seventh (R + 49d), eighth (R+56d), 10th (R + 70d) and 12th week (R + 84) after the parasitoids were released. In the pre-releases, first (R + 7d), second (R + 14d), third (R+ 21d), fourth (R + 28d), sixth (R + 42d), ninth (R + 63d), and the 11th week (R+ 77d) after the release, only very few parasitoids were trapped, and there were no significant differences in the numbers of wasps trapped (Figure 1).

3.3. Estimated percentage of parasitism (EPP)

The EPP by *A. melinus* did not differ significantly between trees' content, VOCs dispensers and paraffin oil dispensers, before and after the release. Except 35 days after the release, parasitism percentage was significantly greater in trees containing β -ocimene dispensers than in the other trees with d-limonene or just paraffin oil dispensers (Figure 2).

3.4. Pattern of parasitism

The cumulative number of *A. melinus* captured in the sticky traps under the d-limonene ($P = 0.912$; $N = 13$; $P \geq 0.000$), β -ocimene ($P = 0.902$; $N = 13$; $P \geq 0.000$), and paraffin oil

dispensers ($P = 0.961$; $N = 13$; $P \geq 0.000$) were significantly correlated with EPP. The regression analysis showed that the number of wasps captured in traps under d-limonene ($R^2 = 0.316$; $F = 5.089$; $P = 0.045$) and β -ocimene ($R^2 = 0.264$; $F = 3.939$; $P = 0.073$) dispensers was also dependent on the available host density but not for the number of wasps captured in traps under paraffin oil dispensers ($R^2 = 0.068$; $F = 0.808$; $P = 0.388$). Furthermore, the EPP in trees with d-limonene ($R^2 = 0.052$; $F = 0.599$; $P = 0.455$), β -ocimene ($R^2 = 0.103$; $F = 1.267$; $P = 0.284$), and paraffin oil ($R^2 = 0.129$; $F = 1.634$; $P = 0.227$) was not correlated significantly to the density of vulnerable hosts. The mean minimum temperatures during the three months of the experiment (September, October and November) were (7.3, 12.5 and 12.1°C), while the mean maximum temperature was (20.1, 23.2 and 24.8°C) respectively.

4. Discussion

The potential of synthetic herbivore-induced plant volatiles (d-limonene and β -ocimene) in a crop dispensed via controlled-release sachets for enhancing the recruitment and residency of some beneficial insects is further supported by the field data presented here. The citrus orchard experiment demonstrated positive responses by certain insect species to d-limonene and β -ocimene-baited trees. Further, our results suggested that biological control of *A. aurantii* was improved by d-limonene and β -ocimene in the citrus experiment.

Previous studies have indicated that wasps often use volatile cues for host location, which makes them ideal targets for biological control programs [38, 39, 11, 12]. Some of these wasps, which were shown previously, significantly responded to d-limonene and/or β -ocimene (e.g., *Aphytis melinus*, *Agathis bishopi* and *Aphidius gifuensis*) [29, 33, 11, 12]. *A. melinus* showed a significant response to d-limonene and β -ocimene in October and November. In the current study, both synthetic HIPVs also attracted wasps in the family Encyrtidae and predators in two families (Chrysopidae and Coccinellidae). Encyrtids and *Comperiella bifasciata* are beneficial insects with the former being important parasitoids of *A. aurantii* but has not responded significantly to both synthetic HIPVs. Chrysopidae (*Mallada* spp.) has significantly responded to d-limonene and β -ocimene in this experiments in October, while Coccinellidae (*Rhizobius lophanthae*) responded significantly to just β -ocimene in September and October for the first time. *Mallada* spp. are an excellent general predator in the larval stage, while ladybird *Rhizobius lophanthae* adult and larva feed on scale insects at all stages. Both of these predators are predatory of many pests such as Aphids, Greenhouse whitefly, Scales, Mealybugs and Moth eggs and small caterpillars. The attraction of these families to d-limonene and β -ocimene has not previously been recorded.

The success of many augmentation biological control programs depends on the dispersal ability of the natural enemy released [40, 41], and on the other hand, the dispersal ability of these natural enemies towards their hosts or preys depends on many factors. These factors can affect the physiological perception and behavioural response by arthropods to volatiles under field conditions. VOCs (e.g. composition and quantity of blends, their emission, and degradation), distances at which they are bioactive, and the physiological state of arthropods that are the putative volatile receivers are all important biotic factors and can interact with abiotic factors, such as wind speed and direction, to affect arthropod response [42]. It is important to have many rather than a few or only one release point in augmentative programs [6]. Insects behaviour which drove by olfactory, among another sensory system parts, influences mate finding, food searching, avoidance of enemies, and competition [43, 44]. Olfactory stimuli from infested fruit are known to be essential during host location behaviour for many parasitoids [30, 45]. In this study, *A. melinus* dispersed progressively from the release points to other citrus trees in the orchard over a period of 12 weeks. Our results show that releases of *A. melinus* during spring (September–November), when virgin female scales are most abundant relative to the other stages, reduces the percentage of scale-infested oranges in the release orchards. As abiotic conditions were variable in the field, the number of *A. melinus* caught in the traps

was quite low in the first month (September) when compared with that in October and November. The compatibility in the number of parasitoids captured in the two treatments (control vs VOCs) during the first month indicates that this was mainly due to low temperature during the release of wasps as the temperature affects the duration of development of *Aphytis* which, in turn, influences their ability to regulate the pest's populations [46]. The results (Figure 1) revealed that the significant higher attraction of *A. Melinus*, which was captured on the sticky traps hanged on citrus trees with d-limonene and β -ocimene dispensers than that on trees with just paraffin oil dispensers in October and November, was likely due to the relative increase in the attractiveness of these trees owing to the presence of the synthetic HIPVs.

Regarding the incidence of parasitism, we focussed on the incidence of parasitism and found that the presence of the HIPV dispensers increased the incidence of parasitism slightly by *A. melinus* under the field conditions compared to parasitism percentage on the absence of HIPV dispensers (Figure 2). In particular, the similarity in the incidence of parasitism in the two treatments (control vs synthetic HIPVs) during the whole trail indicates that this was possibly due to the presence of many fruits infested with *A. aurantii*, both on the trees carrying synthetic HIPVs dispensers and those carrying paraffin oil dispensers, especially if we know that the amount of the d-limonene or β -ocimene in the dispensers is approximately equal to the amount of this volatiles emitted from infested fruit [12]. After 7, 21, 42 and 63 days, the numbers captured was almost zero, mainly because of the life cycle of the released parasitoids, i.e., on these dates, the parasitoid may have been in the larval stages of their life cycle. Regarding the parasitism percentage, the parasitism recorded 35 days after the release was significantly higher in trees hanging β -ocimene dispensers compared other treatments. During other weeks, the EPP was more uniform in all the release trees, with no significant differences between the treatments.

From the viewpoint of plant defence strategies, the emission of the HIPVs that attract the carnivorous natural enemies of herbivores is considered to constitute an indirect defence against herbivores [14, 47]. Importantly, by combining the blend of synthetic volatiles from *A. aurantii*-infested trees with those released by infested citrus trees in the field, we were able to increase the incidence of parasitism of *A. aurantii* slightly by the parasitoid *A. melinus* present in the surrounding environment.

The analysis of the potential association between cumulative parasitoid captures and total EPP, and between these two parameters and the density of susceptible hosts, highlighted that d-limonene and β -ocimene influenced parasitoid dispersal (in terms of captures) towards their host. By contrast, the non-significant association on sticky traps under paraffin oil dispensers suggest that, under the infestation conditions recorded in our trial, VOCs is more important in determining parasitoid dispersal towards their host. Habitat location over longer distances may rather be accomplished by using cues, which are associated with the habitat in general than with the host itself [48], and that leads to the fact that the lack of a significant association between EPP and host density under the infestation conditions recorded in our trial, which d-limonene and β -ocimene have no influence in the increase of parasitism percentage, maybe due to the equal quantities of synthetic d-limonene and β -ocimene released from septum dispensers and infested fruit from one side and other side; it may be because of the parasitoids strategies that predict that oviposition preference of parasitoids should correlate with host suitability for offspring development [49]. To increase the EPP rate, we think that it needs to experiment with higher concentrations of these synthetic VOCs used in comparison with their percentage emitted from infested fruit.

d-limonene and β -ocimene are a common plant volatile, which can be found in the rind of citrus fruits, such as lemons, limes, mandarin, and oranges [32, 11,12]. However, it is also an induced volatile in citrus trees damaged by *A. aurantii* [32, 12]. The attractiveness of d-limonene and β -ocimene to *A. melinus* was demonstrated in olfactometer tests [11, 12]. In the current field study, d-limonene and β -ocimene were attractive to *A. melinus*. Both compounds also attracted beneficial insects in the current field study.

Table 1. Seasonal variation (September–November) (Mean±SE) of CRS’s natural enemies found in yellow sticky traps with controlled-release d-limonene, β-ocimene and paraffin oil dispensers in citrus orchard during 2018.

Beneficial insect	Time	Treatments			P value	F
		d-limonene	β-ocimene	Paraffin oil		
<i>Aphytis melinus</i>	September	1±0.389 a	1.0±0.348a	0.583±0.229 a	0.591	0.534
	October	5.0833±1.062 a	5.667±1.281 a	0.917±0.229 b	0.003	7.134
	November	6.267±1.089 a	6.375±1.080 a	1.5±0.389b	0.001	8.473
<i>Comperiella bifasciata</i>	September	2.333±1.047 a	1.75±0.708 a	0.583±0.193 a	0.248	1.457
	October	3.667±1.170 a	3.667±1.227 a	1.583±0.553 a	0.26	1.403
	November	4.933±1.244 a	4.6±1.249 a	1.933±0.511 a	0.102	2.408
<i>Mallada spp.</i>	September	0.4167±0.193	0.583±0.229	0.167±0.112	0.289	1.29
	October	2.833±0.534 a	2.417±0.417 a	0.917±0.260 b	0.007	5.79
	November	2.667±0.832 a	2.467±0.723 a	0.667±0.187 a	0.065	2.913
<i>Rhizobius lophanthae</i>	September	2.5±0.584 ab	2.917±0.712 a	0.667±0.225 b	0.015	4.785
	October	3.167±0.878 ab	3.5±0.925 a	0.667±0.142 b	0.021	4.37
	November	4.867±0.920 a	4.933±0.983 a	2.267±0.511 a	0.054	3.345

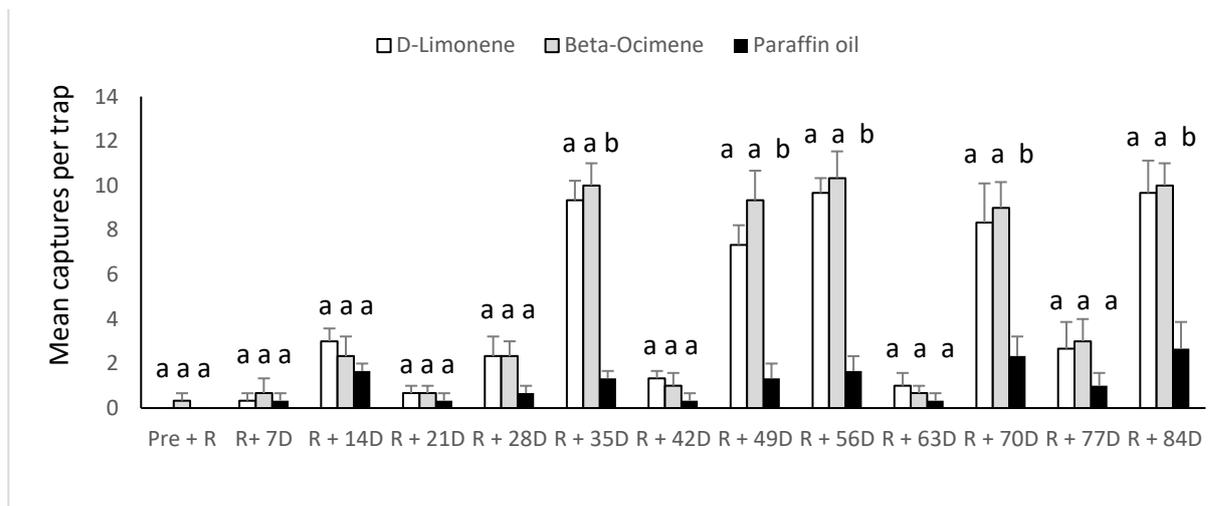


Figure 1. Mean number of adult *Aphytis melinus* captured (±SE) in yellow sticky traps located in citrus orchards baited with controlled-release d-limonene, β-ocimene and paraffin oil dispensers during 2018 growing season in each of the thirteen weeks of the study. Different letters in the same time interval are significantly different (ANOVA $P < 0.05$).

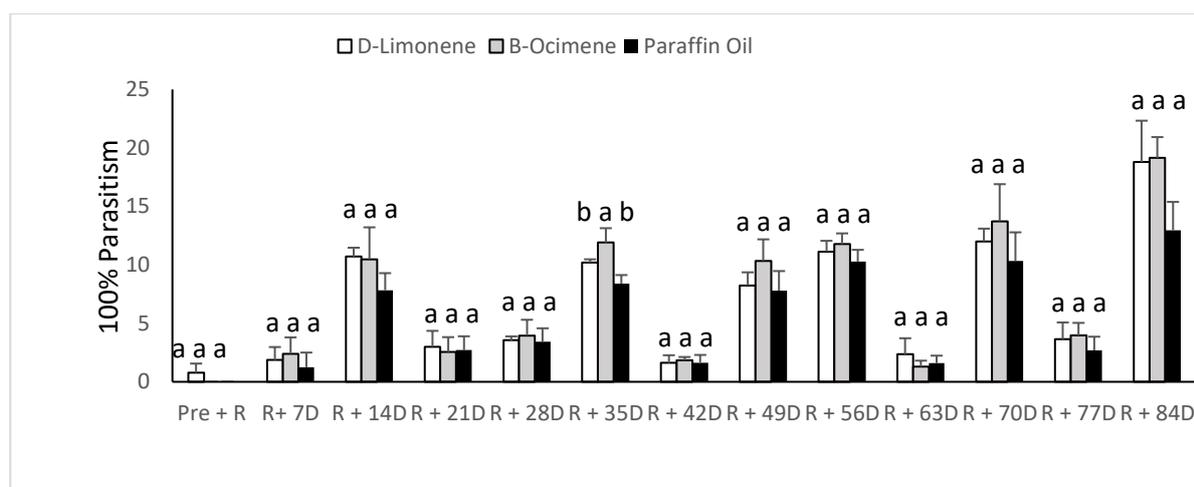


Figure 2. Parasitism 100% of adult *Aphytis melinus* (\pm SE) in citrus orchards baited with controlled-release d-limonene, β -ocimene and paraffin oil dispensers during 2018 growing season in each of the thirteen weeks of the study. Different letters in the same time interval are significantly different (ANOVA $P < 0.05$).

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