

Editor's Comments:

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- Table 1 and 2: indicate with what frequencies the bacteria and fungi were isolated from the dead animals. This is important - if the pathogens are frequent, then the number of test animals needs to be increased.

-3.3, 3.4: how was the health of the test animals ensured - they may already be carriers of the bacterial and fungal strains tested? How were insect deaths depicted on the graphs exactly calculated?

-3.6: with what doses were the synergistic experiments performed? In principle non-toxic doses need to be checked for synergism, as the effect of already toxic doses cannot add up. So were the minimal toxic doses determined beforehand used or were sublethal doses used? Concentration ranges for each pathogen should be tested for synergism.

Authors' Feedback:

- Introduction: reduce the introduction and detail more the problems associated with the use of chemicals mentioned (very briefly) in 1.1. This would be important as the problematic of chemicals forms the basis for the need of entomopathogens

Response: Introduction has been reviewed to focus more on entomopathogens. Excess Information on insects has been removed. The problems of using chemical pesticides have been annotated to really justify the need for entomopathogens in 1.1. All of these now reflects in the paper.

- Table 1 and 2: indicate with what frequencies the bacteria and fungi were isolated from the dead animals. This is important - if the pathogens are frequent, then the number of test animals needs to be increased.

Response: Isolation of these pathogens is not frequent. Infact, it took us three times before we were able to get the right isolates after using differential, selective and general media.

-3.3, 3.4: how was the health of the test animals ensured - they may already be carriers of the bacterial and fungal strains tested? How were insect deaths depicted on the graphs exactly calculated?

Response: For each of the tests, new batch of apparently healthy *Z. variegatus* were collected from the cassava farm and monitored for two weeks to acclimatize and also ensure they are not already carrying pathogens from the field. Even after that, a control experiment is set up by spraying separate populations of insects from the same batch with sterile saline. In cases where any of the insects comes down with any form of health anomalies either within the control batch or during the acclimatization of the whole population batch, the whole group is discarded. This is described in 2.8

-3.6: with what doses were the synergistic experiments performed? In principle non-toxic doses need to be checked for synergism, as the effect of already toxic doses cannot add up. So were the minimal toxic

doses determined beforehand used or were sublethal doses used? Concentration ranges for each pathogen should be tested for synergism.

Response: Minimum Lethal Concentration (MLC) were firstly determined in 2.10 before synergism tests were carried out in 2.11. The MLC determined in 2.10 were the doses used in carrying out the test for synergism in 2.11