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# Effects of feeding different levels of chromium-enriched live yeast in hairy lambs fed a corn-based diet: effects on growth performance, dietary energetics, carcass traits and visceral organ mass

A. Estrada-Angulo<sup>A</sup>, Y. S. Valdés<sup>B</sup>, O. Carrillo-Muro<sup>B</sup>, B. I. Castro-Perez<sup>A</sup>, A. Barreras<sup>B</sup>, M. A. López-Soto<sup>B</sup>, A. Plascencia<sup>B,D</sup>, H. Dávila-Ramos<sup>A</sup>, F. G. Rios<sup>A</sup> and R. A. Zinn<sup>C</sup>

<sup>A</sup>Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria y Zootecnia, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, Culiacán 1084, Sinaloa, México.

<sup>B</sup>Instituto de Investigaciones en Ciencias Veterinarias, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Mexicali 21100, Baja California, México.

<sup>C</sup>Department of Animal Science, University of California Davis, CA 95616, USA.

<sup>D</sup>Corresponding author. Email: [aplas\\_99@yahoo.com](mailto:aplas_99@yahoo.com)

**Abstract.** Forty Pelibuey × Kathdin lambs ( $35.5 \pm 0.4$  kg) were used in a 56-day feeding experiment to assess the effects of feeding different levels of chromium-enriched live yeast (Cr-YC) on growth performance, dietary energetics, carcass traits and visceral organ mass. The Cr-YC source contained  $5.5 \times 10^9$  colony forming units (CFU) and 0.40 mg of Cr per gram. Treatments consisted of a dry rolled corn-based finishing diet supplemented with 0, 1, 2 or 3 g Cr-YC/lamb.day. Total daily dosages were:  $5.5 \times 10^9$  CFU and 0.4 mg;  $1.1 \times 10^{10}$  CFU and 0.8 mg Cr, and  $1.65 \times 10^{10}$  CFU and 1.2 mg Cr for supplementation levels of 1, 2 or 3 g Cr-YC/lamb.day, respectively. There were no treatment effects on dry matter intake. As the level of Cr-YC supplementation increased, average daily gain, gain to feed and dietary net energy were linearly increased, and observed/expected dry matter intake was linearly decreased. Chromium-enriched live yeast supplementation increased empty bodyweight (EBW), gastrointestinal fill and full viscera weight, but did not influence organ weights as a proportion of EBW (g/kg EBW). Cr-YC level did not affect carcass length, backfat thickness, kidney, pelvic and heart fat or body wall thickness, but increased hot carcass weight and *longissimus* muscle area. In general, treatment effects on percentage yield of wholesale cuts (tissue weight as a percentage of cold carcass weight) were small. However, Cr-YC decreased percentage flank. Chromium-enriched yeast supplementation enhances growth rate, *longissimus* muscle area, and dietary energetic efficiency in finishing feedlot lambs.

**Additional keywords:** feed additive, hair sheep breeds, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.

Received 5 June 2012, accepted 13 September 2012, published online 23 January 2013

## Introduction

Concern over the use of regulated growth-enhancing drugs in feed formulations for livestock has furthered interest in the search for generally-recognised-as-safe alternatives. Among these, direct-fed microbials, such as yeast cultures (YC) have shown promise, although responses have not been consistent. In a few studies, YC supplementation enhanced the dry matter intake (DMI) and/or the growth performance of ruminants fed finishing diets (Krehbiel *et al.* 2003; Haddad and Goussous 2005). However, no beneficial effects of YC supplementation were observed in other cases (Zinn *et al.* 1999). Apparently, the efficacy of YC supplementation on finishing diets depends on the level of administration (Domínguez-Vara *et al.* 2009), the diet composition (forage : concentrate ratio; Galip 2006), and whether the YC is utilised alone or is enriched with minerals such as chromium (Cr) (Valdés-García *et al.* 2011). Cr potentiates the

effects of insulin, and thereby, can alter carbohydrate metabolism and protein synthesis (Pallauf and Müller 2006). Chromium supplementation, as Cr propionate or Cr methionine, increased the percentage of carcass muscle and decreased carcass fat in pigs (Mooney and Cromwell 1995; Jackson *et al.* 2009) and feedlot cattle (Barajas *et al.* 2008). By adding inorganic Cr to the fermentor, yeast can combine the Cr into the intracellular proteins or polysaccharides during growth in the form of Cr-chelates, such as Cr nicotinate; which improves Cr bioavailability (Underwood and Suttle 1999). Therefore, positive effects such as enhanced lean tissue growth in finishing ruminants can be expected from the use of Cr-enriched live yeast. However, there is limited information available on the effects of high Cr concentration enriched live yeast supplemented at different levels on the growth performance and carcass characteristics in feedlot lambs. The objective of the present study was to evaluate the influence of high

Cr concentration Cr-enriched live yeast supplemented at different levels in high-energy diets fed to feedlot lambs on growth performance, carcass characteristics and visceral organ mass.

## Materials and methods

This experiment was conducted at the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa Feedlot Lamb Research Unit, located in the Culiacán, México (24°46'13"N and 107°21'14"W). Culiacán is ~55 m above sea level, and has a tropical climate. All animal management procedures were conducted within the guidelines of locally approved techniques for animal use and care (NOM-051-ZOO-1995: humanitarian care of animals during mobilisation of animals; NOM-062-ZOO-1995: technical specifications for the care and use of laboratory animals. Livestock farms, farms, centres of production, reproduction and breeding, zoos and exhibition hall, must meet the basic principles of animal welfare; NOM-024-ZOO-1995: animal health stipulations and characteristics during transportation of animals; and NOM-033-ZOO-1995: humanitarian care and animal protection during slaughter process).

### *Animals and chromium-enriched yeast characteristics*

Sixty Pelibuey × Kathdin lambs were received at the research facility 9 weeks before initiation of the experiment. Upon arrival the lambs were treated for parasites (Tasasel 5%, Fort Dodge, Animal Health, México) and injected with  $1 \times 10^6$  IU vitamin A (Synt-ADE, Fort Dodge, Animal Health). Three weeks before the initiation of the experiment lambs were fed the basal finishing diet. Following a 9-week evaluation period, 40 lambs ( $35.5 \pm 0.1$  kg) were selected from the original group of 60 lambs for use in the study, based on the uniformity of weight and general condition.

The YC used (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* N. strain 7907; Biotecap, Guadalajara, México) contained  $5.5 \times 10^9$  colony forming units (CFU) and 0.40 mg Cr/g (air-dry basis).

### *Diet and experimental design*

The basal finishing diet contained (g/kg DM basis): wheat straw, 60; sudangrass hay, 80; soybean meal, 75; dry rolled corn, 620; tallow, 35; cane molasses, 97; urea, 8; and mineral supplement, 25. The nutrient composition of the diet (DM basis) was: crude protein (CP), 135 g/kg (N × 6.25, method 984.13, AOAC 2000); neutral detergent fibre (NDF), 178 g/kg [Van Soest *et al.* 1991; corrected for NDF-ash, incorporating heat stable  $\alpha$ -amylase (Ankom Technology, Macedon, NY, USA) at 1 mL per 100 mL of NDF solution (Midland Scientific, Omaha, NE, USA)]; ether extract, 64 g/kg (method 920.39, AOAC 2000); calcium, 71 g/kg (method 927.02, AOAC 2000) and phosphorus, 37 g/kg (method 964.06, AOAC 2000). The calculated net energy (NE) of maintenance (NRC 2007) and gain of basal diet were 8.58 and 5.86 MJ/kg, respectively. Upon initiation of the experiment, lambs were weighed before the morning meal (electronic scale; TORREY TIL/S: 107 2691, TOR REY Electronics Inc., Houston, TX, USA), and assigned to one of five weight groupings in 20 pens, with two lambs per pen. Pens were 6 m<sup>2</sup> with overhead shade, automatic waterers and 1-m fence-line feed bunks. Dietary treatments consisted of the basal diet plus 0 (control), 1, 2 or 3 g of Cr-YC/lamb.day. Doses of Cr-YC were hand-weighed using a

precision balance (Ohaus, mod AS612, Pine Brook, NJ, USA), and were pre-mixed for 5 min with minor ingredients (urea, limestone and trace mineral salt) before incorporation into complete mixed diets. The final product was mixed with the rest of ingredients in a 2.5-m<sup>3</sup> capacity paddle mixer (model 30910-7, Coyoacán, México). To avoid contamination, the mixer was thoroughly cleaned between each treatment. Dietary treatments were randomly assigned to pens within blocks. Lambs were weighed before the morning meal on Day 1 and Day 56 (harvest). Lambs were allowed *ad libitum* access to dietary treatments. Daily feed allotments to each pen were adjusted to allow minimal (<5%) feed refusals in the feed bunk. The amounts of feed offered and of feed refused were weighed daily. Lambs were provided fresh feed twice daily at 0800 and 1400 hours. Feed bunks were visually assessed between 0740 and 0750 hours each morning, refusals were collected and weighed and feed intake was determined. Adjustments to, either increase or decrease daily feed delivery, were provided at the afternoon feeding. Feed and refusal samples were collected daily for DM analysis, which involved oven drying the samples at 105°C until no further weight loss occurred (method 930.15, AOAC 2000).

### *Calculations*

The estimations of dietary energetic and expected DMI were performed based on the estimated initial and final shrunk bodyweight (SBW), to convert to a SBW basis is assuming that SBW is 96% of full weight (CSIRO 1990; Cannas *et al.* 2004). Average daily gains (ADG) were computed by subtracting the initial BW from the final BW and dividing the result by the number of days on feed. The efficiency of BW gain was computed by dividing ADG by the daily DMI.

The estimation of expected DMI was performed based on observed ADG and SBW according to the following equation: expected DMI, kg/day = (EM/NE<sub>m</sub>) + (EG/NE<sub>g</sub>), where EM (energy required for maintenance, MJ/day) = [4.184 × (0.056 × SBW<sup>0.75</sup>)] (NRC 1985), EG (energy gain, MJ/day) = [4.184 × (0.276 × ADG × SBW<sup>0.75</sup>)] (NRC 1985), NE<sub>m</sub> and NE<sub>g</sub> are 8.58 and 5.86 MJ/kg, respectively (derived from tabular values based on the ingredient composition of the experimental diet; NRC 1985), and SBW represent full BW × 0.96, Cannas *et al.* 2004]. The coefficient (0.276) was estimated assuming a mature weight of 113 kg for Pelibuey × Kathdin male lambs (Canton and Quintal 2007). Dietary NE were estimated by means of the quadratic formula:

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2c},$$

where  $x = \text{NE}_m$ ,  $a = -0.41\text{EM}$ ,  $b = 0.877\text{EM} + 0.41\text{DMI} + \text{EG}$ , and  $c = -0.877\text{DMI}$  (Zinn *et al.* 2008) and, the results obtained were multiplied by 4.184 to convert to units of MJ.

### *Carcass and visceral mass data*

Lambs were killed by severing the jugular vein and carotid artery. After sacrifice, lambs were skinned, and the gastrointestinal (GIT) organs were separated and weighed. After carcasses (with kidneys and internal fat included) were chilled in a cooler at -2 to 1°C for 48 h, the following measurements were obtained:

(1) carcass length (maximum distance between the edge of the ischio-pubic symphysis and anterior border of the first rib at its midpoint); (2) carcass depth (maximum distance between the sternum and the back of carcass, at the level of the sixth thoracic vertebra); (3) leg length (distance from the symphysis pubis to the tarsal-metatarsal joint); (4) body wall thickness (distance between the 12th and 13th ribs beyond the ribeye, five inches from the midline of the carcass); (5) fat thickness perpendicular to the *M. longissimus thoracis* (LM), measured over the centre of the ribeye between the 12th and 13th rib; (6) LM surface area, measure using a grid reading of the cross-sectional area of the ribeye between 12th and 13th rib, and (7) kidney, pelvic and heart fat (KPH). The KPH was removed manually from the carcass, and then weighed and reported as a percentage of the cold carcass weight (USDA 1982). Each carcass was split along the vertebrae into halves. The left side of each carcass was fabricated into wholesale cuts, without trimming, according to the North American Meat Processors Association guidelines (NAMP 1997). Rack, breast, shoulder and foreshank were obtained from the foresaddle, and the loins, flank and leg from the hindsaddle. The weights of each cut were subsequently recorded.

All tissue weights were reported on a fresh tissue basis. Previous data suggests that there is very little variation among fresh and dry weights for visceral organs (Neville *et al.* 2008). Organ mass was expressed as grams of fresh tissue per kilogram of final empty BW. Final EBW represents the final full BW minus the total digesta weight. Full visceral mass was calculated by the summation of all visceral components (stomach complex + small intestine + large intestine + liver + lungs + heart), including digesta. The stomach complex was calculated as the digesta-free sum of the weights of the rumen, reticulum, omasum and abomasum.

#### Statistical analyses

Performance (gain, gain efficiency, and dietary energetics) and carcass data, were analysed as a randomised complete block design. The experimental unit was pen. The MIXED procedure of SAS (SAS Institute 2004) was used to analyse the variables. The fixed effect consisted of treatment, and pen as the random component. Whole cuts data were analysed using the MIXED procedure (SAS Institute 2004), in a model with treatment and pen as fixed effects and interaction treatment  $\times$  pen and individual carcasses within pen by treatment subclasses as random effects, with the final hot carcass weight (HCW) as a covariate when it represented a significant ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) source of variation. The mean of HCW to which the data are adjusted was 28.676 kg.

Visceral organ mass data were analysed using the MIXED procedure (SAS Institute 2004), in a model with treatment and pen as fixed effects and interaction treatment  $\times$  pen and individual carcasses within pen by treatment subclasses as random effects. Treatment effects were tested for linear, quadratic and cubic components of the Cr-YC supplementation level. Contrasts were considered significant when the  $P$ -value was  $\leq 0.05$ , and tendencies were identified when the  $P$ -value was  $>0.05$  and  $\leq 0.10$ .

#### Results

Quadratic and cubic effects were not significant ( $P \geq 0.10$ ). Thus, the  $P$ -values for those components are not presented in the tables.

#### Growth performance

There were no treatment effects ( $P = 0.59$ ) on DMI, averaging 1.18 kg/day. Observed DMI of the control (non-supplemented) lambs was 98% of that expected based on tabular estimates (NRC 2007) of dietary energy density and observed SBW and ADG (Table 1). This supports the practicality of the prediction equations proposed by the NRC (1985) for the estimation of DMI in relation of SBW and ADG in feedlot lambs. As the level of supplemental Cr-YC increased, ADG, GF and dietary NE increased (linear effect,  $P \leq 0.04$ ), and observed/expected DMI decreased (linear effect,  $P < 0.01$ ).

#### Visceral mass

Treatment effects on the empty BW and viscera weight are shown in Table 2. GIT fill averaged 7.6% of the final EBW (7.1% of non-adjusted final SBW), and was not affected ( $P \geq 0.19$ ) by supplemental Cr-YC. However, Cr-YC supplementation increased (linear effect,  $P \leq 0.05$ ) the EBW, GIT fill and full viscera weights. Cr-YC supplementation did not influence ( $P \geq 0.18$ ) the organ weights as a proportion of EBW (g/kg EBW).

#### Carcass traits

The Cr-YC level did not affect ( $P \geq 0.09$ ) carcass length, carcass width, leg length, back-fat thickness, KPH or body wall thickness, but increased (linear  $P \leq 0.03$ ) the HCW and LM area (Table 3). Because final HCW represented a significant ( $P \leq 0.05$ ) source of variation in analysis of wholesale cut weights (kg), it was used as a covariate in the analysis of treatment effects. Generally, treatment effects on percentage yield of wholesale cuts (tissue weight as a percentage of CCW) were small ( $P \geq 0.23$ ; Table 4). However, Cr-YC decreased ( $P = 0.03$ ) percentage flank.

#### Discussions

##### Dry matter intake

Previously (Phillips and VonTungeln 1985; Chang and Mowat 1992; Cole *et al.* 1992; Zinn *et al.* 1999) YC supplementation of shipping stressed cattle reduced sick days and/or enhanced feed intake during the initial receiving period (<35 days). However, subsequent effects on growth performance have been small or non-appreciable. Consistent with the present study, *S. cerevisiae* supplementation (3 g/day) did not affect the DMI in lambs fed a high-energy diet (74-day experiment; Haddad and Goussous 2005). Likewise, Adams *et al.* (1981) reported no differences in DMI of lambs fed a 50:50 forage:concentrate diet supplemented with 2.5% of live yeast (targeted 20 g/lamb.day of *S. cerevisiae*) during a 73-day growing-finishing period. Supplemental *Aspergillus oryzae* (1 g/day) did not affect DMI of lambs fed a high-energy finishing diet during a 72-day period (Zerby *et al.* 2011). In steers, supplementation with 10 g/day YC did not affect the DMI of steers fed a 74% barley-based finishing diet (Mir and Mir 1994). Likewise, Hinman *et al.* (1998) observed that YC supplementation did not affect DMI in yearling steers fed a barley- and potato-processing residue-based finishing diet. In their study, the feeding rate for live YC was 85 g/day for the first 28 days and 28 g/day from Day 29 to Day 115 (harvest).

**Table 1. Treatment effects on growth performance and dietary energy**

Basal diet supplemented to provide 0, 1, 2, or 3 g chromium-enriched live yeast culture per head per day. Dietary energetic and expected dry matter intake (DMI) estimations were performed based on the estimation of initial and final shrunk bodyweight (SBW), to convert to a SBW basis is assuming that SBW is 96% of full weight (CSIRO 1990; Cannas *et al.* 2004). Observed to expected dietary net energy (NE) ratio was computed by dividing NE observed between expected diet NE, which was estimated based on tabular values for individual dietary ingredients (NRC 2007). Expected DMI was computed as follows:  $DMI, \text{ kg/day} = (EM/NE_m) + (EG/EN_g)$ , where EM = maintenance coefficient of  $0.056 \text{ Mcal/BW}^{0.75}$  (NRC 1985) and EG is the daily energy deposited (Mcal/day) estimated by equation:  $EG = [(0.276 \times ADG) \times SBW^{0.75}]$ , NRC 1985]. The divisors  $NE_m$  and  $NE_g$  are the NE of diet [calculated from tables of composition of feed (NRC 1985)]. Within rows, means followed by different letters are significantly different at  $P < 0.05$

Item	Chromium-enriched yeast level (g per head per day)				s.e.m.	Contrast P-value linear
	Control	1	2	3		
	<i>Liveweight (kg)</i>					
Initial	37.09	37.01	37.03	36.99	0.19	
Final	50.08a	50.66ab	51.85ab	53.60b	1.09	0.04
ADG (kg)	0.232a	0.244ab	0.265ab	0.297b	0.019	0.03
DMI (g/day)	1.185	1.132	1.197	1.204	0.049	0.59
Gain for feed (kg/kg)	0.196a	0.216ab	0.222abc	0.247c	0.009	<0.01
	<i>Dietary NE (Mcal/kg)</i>					
Maintenance	2.01a	2.13b	2.20bc	2.27c	0.03	<0.01
Gain	1.38a	1.47b	1.51bc	1.59c	0.02	<0.01
	<i>Observed to expected dietary NE ratio</i>					
Maintenance	1.00a	1.07b	1.10bc	1.14c	0.01	<0.01
Gain	1.00a	1.09b	1.12bc	1.18c	0.02	<0.01
Observed to expected daily DMI	0.98a	0.91b	0.88bc	0.84c	0.01	<0.01

**Table 2. Treatment effects on visceral organ weight**

Basal diet supplemented to provide 0, 1, 2, or 3 g chromium-enriched live yeast culture per head per day. Full viscera = full viscera mass = (stomach complex + small intestine + large intestine + liver + lungs + heart) including digesta and mesenteric fat. Stomach complex = (rumen + reticulum + omasum + abomasums), without digesta. Intestines represent small and large intestine without digesta. Within rows, means followed by different letters are significantly different at  $P < 0.05$

Item	Chromium-enriched yeast level (g per head per day)				s.e.m.	Contrast P-value linear
	Control	1	2	3		
Full final weight (kg)	50.08	50.66	51.85	53.60	1.04	0.01
Fill (kg)	3.51a	4.13ab	4.54ab	4.75b	0.15	0.05
Empty bodyweight (kg)	46.35a	47.03ab	48.22ab	49.70b	0.98	0.03
Empty bodyweight (% of full weight)	93.04	92.82	92.99	92.72	0.15	0.19
Full viscera (kg)	9.91a	10.73ab	10.76ab	11.20b	0.22	0.04
	<i>Organs (g/kg empty bodyweight)</i>					
Stomach complex	31.52	32.83	31.17	33.27	1.32	0.56
Intestines	43.00	44.38	44.36	45.64	1.16	0.19
Liver	18.59	18.66	19.03	19.95	0.73	0.18
Kidney	2.64	2.70	2.69	2.56	0.03	0.75
Heart and lungs	23.62	22.64	21.68	22.79	0.97	0.27
Visceral fat	35.15	36.30	33.69	34.56	2.73	0.62

### Growth performance

Whereas supplementation with probiotics has been reported to improve growth performance, including ADG, and/or gain to feed (GF) (Abdelrahman and Hunaiti 2008; Khalid *et al.* 2011), results have not been consistent. In agreement with the present study, lambs fed an 80% concentrate diet supplemented with 0.5 g/day YC (non-Cr enriched yeast with  $20 \times 10^9$  CFU) had greater ADG (13.1%) and gain efficiency (7.3%) than non-supplemented lambs (Ding *et al.* 2008). Likewise, Haddad and Goussous (2005), using the same source of YC as that used by Ding *et al.* (2008) observed that supplementation with 3 g/day of

YC increased the ADG (25.4%) and gain efficiency (16%) with no effects on carcass characteristics in fattening Awassi lambs fed an 80% concentrate diet. These improvements were associated with an increased digestibility of organic matter (5.9%), N (10.8%), and NDF (7%). Payandeh and Kafilzadeh (2007) observed increased ADG, but no effects on GF due to the YC supplementation of finishing lambs fed a high-energy beet pulp-based diet. Likewise, Abas *et al.* (2007) noted increased ADG without an effect on GF in finishing yearling lambs supplemented with 0.5 g/kg of YC (*Enterococcus faecium*). In contrast, numerous studies have reported no effect of YC

**Table 3. Treatment effects on dressing percentage and carcass characteristics**

Basal diet supplemented to provide 0, 1, 2, or 3 g chromium-enriched live yeast culture per head per day. Dressing percentage was computed as follows: dressing percentage = (hot carcass weight/FBW) × 100. Fat thickness was taken over the centre of the *M. longissimus* between the 12th and 13th ribs. Within rows, means followed by different letters are significantly different at  $P < 0.05$

Item	Chromium-enriched yeast level (g per head per day)				s.e.m.	Contrast <i>P</i> -value Linear
	Control	1	2	3		
Replicates	10	10	10	10		
Hot carcass weight (kg)	27.42a	27.92ab	28.82ab	29.76b	0.59	0.02
Cold carcass weight (kg)	27.55	27.51	27.51	27.52	0.55	0.62
Dressing percent	54.75	55.04	55.63	55.57	0.43	0.79
<i>M. longissimus</i> area (cm <sup>2</sup> )	14.04a	14.61ab	15.53bc	15.99c	0.30	0.03
Carcass length (cm)	67.9	66.3	66.4	66.2	0.61	0.38
Carcass width (cm)	31.4	28.6	29.7	29.3	0.97	0.27
Leg length (cm)	42.5	43.0	43.1	42.2	0.47	0.60
Kidney-pelvic fat (%)	2.72	2.61	2.54	2.87	0.19	0.31
Backfat thickness (mm)	2.34	2.89	3.25	2.93	0.19	0.23
Body wall thickness (mm)	14.21	14.59	13.80	14.70	0.37	0.84

**Table 4. Treatment effects on yield of wholesale cuts**

Basal diet supplemented to provide 0, 1, 2, or 3 g chromium-enriched live yeast culture per head per day. Within rows, means followed by different letters are significantly different at  $P < 0.05$

Item	Chromium-enriched yeast level (g per head per day)				s.e.m.	Contrast <i>P</i> -value linear
	Control	1	2	3		
No. of lambs	10	10	10	10		
	<i>Carcass and wholesale cuts weight (kg)</i>					
Forequarter	6.3	6.1	6.2	5.7	0.18	0.11
Hindquarter	5.80	6.21	5.96	5.99	0.17	0.66
Neck weight	1.03	1.01	1.09	1.09	0.04	0.19
Shoulder	2.23	2.21	2.21	2.18	0.03	0.34
Shoulder IMPS206	1.35	1.31	1.27	1.25	0.04	0.11
Leg IMPS233	3.70a	3.82ab	3.88b	3.79ab	0.06	0.08
Loin IMPS231	1.11	1.12	1.08	1.11	0.02	0.66
Rack IMPS204	1.28	1.25	1.24	1.23	0.02	0.15
Flank IMPS232	1.04	0.97	0.99	0.93	0.03	0.03
Breast IMPS209 weight	0.39	0.32	0.37	0.34	0.03	0.11
	<i>Whole cuts (% of cold carcass weight)</i>					
Forequarter	22.08	21.29	21.64	20.10	0.60	0.13
Hindquarter	20.20	22.07	20.80	20.99	0.76	0.23
Neck	3.60	3.55	3.82	3.80	0.14	0.19
Shoulder	7.81	7.74	7.72	7.62	0.12	0.27
Shoulder IMPS206	4.69	4.55	4.41	4.34	0.15	0.15
Leg IMPS233	12.94	13.37	13.55	13.24	0.21	0.28
Loin IMPS231	3.88	3.90	3.70	3.87	0.08	0.38
Rack IMPS204	4.42	4.34	4.30	4.33	0.08	0.40
Flank	3.59a	3.37ab	3.43ab	3.24b	0.09	0.03
Breast IMPS209	1.33	1.10	1.30	1.18	0.08	0.72

supplementation on either ADG or GF of either light- (Kawas *et al.* 2007; Tripathi *et al.* 2008) or heavy-weight finishing lambs (Romero *et al.* 2009; Titi *et al.* 2008), or feedlot steers (Baumann *et al.* 2004).

The basis for inconsistencies in growth performance responses to non-mineral-enriched YC supplementation is not certain. In the majority of cases, changes in digestibility as result of yeast

supplementation, was the main argument used to explain the difference in weight gain and/or GF observed for YC-supplemented diets (Khalid *et al.* 2011). The efficacy of YC supplementation may depend, in part, on chemical composition of the diet (Wohlt *et al.* 1991; Piva *et al.* 1993; Ding *et al.* 2008). Increasing the level of non-structural carbohydrates (grain, molasses, high-starch by-product feeds, etc.) in the diet may

decrease fibre digestion through its influence ruminal pH and associated effects on the specific growth rates of cellulolytic bacteria. The predicted ruminal pH for the basal diet used in the present experiment is 5.82 (NRC 1996; Level 2). Growth of cellulolytic bacteria is optimal at ruminal pH of greater than 6.5. Between pH of 6.5 and 6.0, the specific growth rate decreases 14%/h for every 0.1-unit decrease in ruminal pH. Cellulolytic bacteria do not grow at ruminal pH below 6.0 (Russell and Wilson 1996).

The negative effects of diet on ruminal fibrolytic capacity may be partially overcome with YC supplementation. YC supplementation increased the concentration of ruminal cellulolytic bacteria (Dawson *et al.* 1990), and *in situ* (Williams *et al.* 1991), *in vitro* (Ruf *et al.* 1953), and *in vivo* (Zinn and Borquez 1993) NDF digestion.

YC supplementation of finishing diets at levels greater than  $10 \times 10^9$  CFU/g increased in ADG and/or GF (Haddad and Goussous 2005; Ding *et al.* 2008). In the present experiment, ADG and GF were enhanced at supplementation level of 1 g/day head ( $5.5 \times 10^9$  CFU).

Response to YC supplementation is also affected by type of YC utilised (alone or combined with minerals such as Cr or selenium; Domínguez-Vara *et al.* 2009). Previous reports indicate that Cr supplementation as Cr propionate or Cr methionine, improved ADG and feed efficiency in pigs (Lindemann *et al.* 1995; Mooney and Cromwell 1995; Jackson *et al.* 2009), and feedlot cattle (Barajas *et al.* 2008). Consistent with our findings, Valdés-García *et al.* (2011) reported no effect of Cr-YC supplementation on DMI, but linear improvements on ADG, GF, and dietary NE in finishing feedlot heifers fed a similar diet supplemented with 0, 10, 20 and 30 g/head.day Cr-YC. Likewise, Pechová *et al.* (2002) observed greater (26.8%) ADG in finishing bulls supplemented with 0.013 mg Cr/kg BW/day from Cr-YC during the initial 136 days of a finishing experiment. In contrast, Domínguez-Vara *et al.* (2009) did not observe an influence on growth performance of feedlot lambs supplemented with 0, 0.25, or 0.35 mg Cr/head from Cr-YC. Swanson *et al.* (2000) reported that supplementation with 0.10, 0.20, or 0.40 mg of Cr from Cr-YC did not affect ADG or GF in steers fed a corn silage-based diet. However, the maximum daily supplemental Cr intakes (mg Cr/kg BW) in these latter two studies (Swanson *et al.* 2000; Domínguez-Vara *et al.* 2009) were low (0.009 and 0.010 mg, respectively).

Previous studies (Petersen *et al.* 1987; Cole *et al.* 1992) demonstrated that YC supplementation may reduce urinary mineral excretion and increase total daily metabolisable minerals and retention. Nevertheless, the bioavailability of even chelated Cr may be low. Holland (1982) observed that 55% of ingested Cr was excreted by rats fed Cr-enriched yeast, and of the remaining 45%, only half could be detected in body tissues.

#### *Visceral organ mass and carcass traits*

Romero *et al.* (2009) observed that supplementation of feedlot steers with 0.18 mg/kg of DM of Cr via Cr-YC increased the carcass dressing percentage. In contrast, Titi *et al.* (2008) observed decreased dressing percentages in lambs supplemented with YC at rate of 12.5 g/day.head.

Consistent with the present study, Kitchalong *et al.* (1995) observed that supplementation with 0.25 mg/kg of Cr

tripicolinate did not affect heart, liver, kidney or pelvic fat weight of feedlot lambs. The addition of 0.2 mg/kg of Cr as Cr nicotinate increased head, liver, and kidney weights, and decreased the internal fat weight in fat-tailed lambs (Mostafa-Tehrani *et al.* 2006). Gentry *et al.* (1999) observed greater kidney weight, but reduced liver weight in lambs supplemented with Cr tripicolinate in high-protein diets (12.9% CP). However, they did not observe those effects of Cr supplementation on carcass characteristics with Cr supplementation of low-protein diets (9.0% CP).

As discussed previously, the effect of YC supplementation, alone (not enriched with Cr), on carcass characteristics (Jones *et al.* 1997; Kawas *et al.* 2007; Payandeh and Kafizadeh 2007; Titi *et al.* 2008; Zerby *et al.* 2011), wholesale cuts (Titi *et al.* 2008; Whitley *et al.* 2009), or visceral mass (Belew and Jimoh 2005) of feedlot lambs has been small and non-appreciable. Thus, is expected that the changes in carcass measures in the present experiment are more directly related to Cr intake, *per se*.

Effects of Cr-YC supplementation of lambs on carcass characteristics and yield of wholesale cuts has not been previously reported. Cr appears to potentiate insulin action by enhancing its binding to target cell receptors, and also by improving its post-receptor signalling, contributing to enhanced lean tissue growth (Debski *et al.* 2004; Pechová and Pavlata 2007). Accordingly, increased carcass leanness and LM area in pigs (Page *et al.* 1993; Mooney and Cromwell 1995), and increased carcass leanness in birds (Sahin *et al.* 2002, 2003) have been consistent responses to Cr supplementation. Likewise, Cr supplementation increased glucose uptake, enhanced protein synthesis (Pollard *et al.* 2001), and reduced body fat (Barajas *et al.* 2008; Valdés-García *et al.* 2011) in feedlot cattle fed conventional finishing diets.

Romero *et al.* (2009) did not observe an effect of Cr-YC supplementation (0.18 mg/kg of DM of Cr) on measures of LM area, and external and internal fat deposition in feedlot steers. Domínguez-Vara *et al.* (2009) observed increased HCW weight, LM area and carcass protein levels, and decreased carcass fat in finishing lambs supplemented with 0.25 mg/kg of Cr plus 0.3 mg/kg of selenium from Cr and selenium-enriched yeast. However, supplementation with Cr alone did not affect the carcass characteristics.

Supplemental Cr requirements of ruminants have not been established (NRC 1997, 2007; Murdoch *et al.* 2006). In the present study, the average consumption of supplemental Cr per kg of BW was 0.019 (range from 0.009 to 0.028). This represents at least a 2-fold increase over that of dosages used in other studies where there was no consistent effect on growth performance or carcass traits in cattle supplemented with enriched Cr yeast (Swanson *et al.* 2000; Domínguez-Vara *et al.* 2009; Romero *et al.* 2009). Thus it appears that optimal levels of supplemental Cr required to enhance growth performance and carcass characteristics in ruminants may be greater than those proposed for pigs.

## Conclusions

Chromium-enriched yeast supplementation markedly enhances the growth performance, dietary NE, HCW and LM area in finishing feedlot lambs. Maximal response (gain and efficiency)

was observed when Cr-YC was supplemented at the rate of 3 g/day ( $1.65 \times 10^{10}$  CFU and 1.20 mg of Cr).

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