Continuous light versus photoperiod: effects on eye size and deformities in larval and juvenile cod

Terje van der Meeren1, Per Gunnar Fjelldal2, & George Nardi3

1 Institute of Marine Research, Austevoll Research Station, NO-5392 Storebø, Norway
2 Institute of Marine Research, Matre Research Station, NO-5984 Matredal, Norway
3 GreatBay Aquaculture Inc., 153 Gosling Rd. Portsmouth, NH 03801, USA

Our results show that larval rearing environment may have direct impacts on morphological development of larval fish. How these perturbations may affect larval function and quality remain unclear and require further investigation. The results indicate that care should be taken when an organism is propagated for aquaculture and subjected to an artificial environment.

Experiment 1:
Cod larvae reared in two 2.5m³ tanks (photoperiod versus continuous light) were investigated for cell proliferation rate. Cell division was determined on the eye disc surface which has thin cell layers where cells easily can be counted (Fig. 1).

The results showed that 11-day-old cod larvae with photoperiod had significantly lower cell division rate in the outer cell layers of the eye than cod larvae with continuous light (Fig. 2) (2-way ANOVA, p<0.001). Compared to the continuous light larvae, photoperiod resulted in significantly smaller eyes at similar length on day 32 posthatch (Fig. 3) (ANCOVA, p<0.001).

Experiment 2:
Cod larvae were reared in 400 liters tanks (photoperiod versus continuous light, triplicate treatments). The rearing was extended well into juvenile stages up to a size of about 10 g (day 134).

Only morphometrics were investigated in this experiment. Similar to the results of the first experiment, the relationship between eye size and fish length was significantly lower in the photoperiod treated larvae (Fig. 4). This effect extended into the juvenile stages.

50 juvenile cod from each of two tanks within the two light treatments were inspected for bone deformities by X-ray imaging. Deformed vertebrae and the bent neck deformity were found in cod from both treatments, while lordosis was only observed in the continuous light group (Fig. 5).

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