


# Effect of pesticide application on *Salmonella* survival on inoculated tomato leaves

Ganyu Gu<sup>1,2</sup> | Claire M. Murphy<sup>3</sup> | Alexis M. Hamilton<sup>3</sup> | Jie Zheng<sup>4</sup> |  
Xiangwu Nou<sup>2</sup> | Steven L. Rideout<sup>1</sup> | Laura K. Strawn<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA

<sup>2</sup>Environmental Microbial and Food Safety Laboratory, United States Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service, Beltsville, Maryland, USA

<sup>3</sup>Department of Food Science and Technology, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA

<sup>4</sup>Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, US Food and Drug Administration, College Park, Maryland, USA

## Correspondence

Laura K. Strawn, Department of Food Science and Technology, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, USA.

Email: [lstrawn@vt.edu](mailto:lstrawn@vt.edu)

## Funding information

Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Food and Drug Administration; United States Department of Agriculture; Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station and the Hatch Program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture

## Abstract

Outbreaks of Salmonellosis have been traced to contaminated tomato. The produce production environment poses a risk for *Salmonella* contamination; however, little is known about the effects of pest management practices on *Salmonella* during production. The study objective was to evaluate pesticide application on the inactivation of *Salmonella* on tomato leaves. Thirty greenhouse-grown tomato plants were inoculated with *S. enterica* serovars Newport or Typhimurium. Inoculation was performed by dipping tomato leaves in an 8-log CFU/mL *Salmonella* suspension with 0.025% (vol/vol) Silwet L-77 surfactant for 30 s, for a starting concentration of 6–7 log CFU/mL. Plants were treated with one of four pesticides, each with a different mode of action [acibenzolar-S-methyl, copper-hydroxide, peroxyacetic acid (PAA), and streptomycin]. Pesticides were applied at manufacturers' labeled rate for plant disease management with water as a control treatment. *Salmonella* was enumerated at 0.125 (3 h), 2, 6, and 9 days post-inoculation (dpi), and counts log-transformed. Growth of *Salmonella* was not observed. At 2 dpi, PAA and streptomycin significantly reduced surface *Salmonella* concentrations of inoculated tomato leaves (0.7 and 0.6-log CFU/g, respectively;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), while significant *Salmonella* log reduction occurred in the ground tomato leaves after copper hydroxide treatment (0.8-log CFU/g;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), compared to the control. No significant differences in *Salmonella* populations on tomato leaf surface and in ground leaves were observed from 2 to 9 dpi, regardless of pesticide application. These findings suggest single in-field pesticide applications may not be an effective mitigation strategy in limiting potential *Salmonella* contamination. Future research, including multiple in-field pesticide applications, or pesticide use in combination with other mitigation strategies, may offer intriguing management practices to limit possible preharvest contamination.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Tomato bacterial diseases, such as those caused by *Xanthomonas vesicatoria* (bacterial spot), *Clavibacter michiganensis* (bacterial canker), and

*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *tomato* (bacterial speck), poses a major threat to tomato production in the United States and worldwide (Jones, Zitter, Momol, & Miller, 2014). Multiple pesticides, possessing various modes of action, are commercially available and routinely

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited and is not used for commercial purposes.

© 2023 The Authors. *Journal of Food Safety* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC.

applied to manage bacterial diseases of fresh market tomatoes (Kuhar et al., 2020). Copper hydroxide is a widely used pesticide labeled to suppress levels of several bacterial and fungal diseases in tomatoes. Copper-containing materials are broad spectrum, multi-site, and active on bacterial pathogens through disruption of cellular proteins and enzymes, such as aggregation of ROS-independent protein and inhibition of peptidoglycan LD-transpeptidases (Baena, Marquez, Matres, Botella, & Ventosa, 2006; Mahovic, Gu, & Rideout, 2013; Ritchie, 2004). Acibenzolar-S-methyl stimulates the plant's natural defenses through mimicking the natural systemic activated resistance (SAR) response, which allows the host plant to ward off infection from certain bacterial and fungal pathogens (Graves & Alexander, 2002). Peroxyacetic acid (PAA) is advertised to offer broad spectrum bacterial and fungal control of diseases in tomato when field applied to crops (Huang, de Vries, & Chen, 2018). PAA is also used as a surface sanitizer and postharvest water treatment additive to reduce potential cross-contamination in dump tanks/flumes (Mari, Bertolini, & Pratella, 2003; Sargent, Ritenour, Brecht, & Bartz, 2000; Sisquella, Casals, Viñas, Teixidó, & Usall, 2013). Streptomycin is an aminoglycoside antibiotic with antibacterial activity, and is labeled for control of bacterial diseases, especially during greenhouse transplant production (Mahovic et al., 2013).

The use of multiple pesticides in the production environment is a comprehensive approach to quality and integrated pest management (IPM) programs, allowing different modes of action to suppress or eliminate a variety of phytopathogens; thus, also reducing the likelihood of bactericidal resistant plant pathogen strains. This approach attempts to optimize preharvest pesticide use within the context of the microbial diversity of the phyllosphere by promoting the use of pesticides with multiple purposes; leading this study to investigate impacts against foodborne pathogens (Miller, Ferreira, & LeJeune, 2022). This may be of particular importance as some studies have observed plant pathogens to enhance the survival of foodborne pathogens, for example, *Xanthomonas perforans* and *X. campestris*, in production environments (Barak & Liang, 2008; Potnis et al., 2014). However, despite investigation on the efficacy of these commonly applied pesticides for tomato disease prevention, few studies have examined the activity of these pesticides on foodborne pathogen prevention for tomatoes during pre-harvest production.

Between 1990 and 2017, fresh tomatoes were linked to 38 outbreaks in the United States, resulting in 4,028 illnesses and four deaths (Bennett, Littrell, Hill, Mahovic, & Behraves, 2015; Jackson, Griffin, Cole, Walsh, & Chai, 2013; Krug, Valadez, Chapin, Schneider, & Danyluk, 2020; Lynch, Tauxe, & Hedberg, 2009). Of these 38 fresh tomato outbreaks, *Salmonella* was confirmed as the causative agent in 30, with serovar Newport accounting for 11 of the *Salmonella* tomato-borne outbreaks (Bennett et al., 2015; Jackson et al., 2013; Krug et al., 2020; Lynch et al., 2009). *Salmonella* causes ~1.2 million illnesses, and the most foodborne bacterial hospitalizations and deaths, annually in the United States (Scallan et al., 2011). While traceback investigations may not ultimately identify the initial point source of contamination, it is hypothesized that most of the *Salmonella* Newport outbreaks associated with tomatoes resulted from pre-harvest contamination (Bell et al., 2015; Greene et al., 2008; Gu et al., 2018a, Gu et al., 2018b; Gu, Strawn,

Zheng, Reed, & Rideout, 2019; Truitt et al., 2018). For example, in two multistate outbreaks of *Salmonella* Newport (2002 and 2005) from Virginia tomato fruits, the outbreak strain was isolated and genotypically identified using pulse-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) from pond water that was used to irrigate the tomato fields (Greene et al., 2008). Multiple studies have investigated produce contamination pathways in the pre-harvest environment, including through biological soil amendments of animal origin (BSAAO), irrigation water, domestic and wild animals, and pesticide applications (Bell et al., 2015; Danyluk et al., 2008; Gorski et al., 2011; Gruszynski et al., 2014; Gu et al., 2018a, Gu et al., 2018b; Gu et al., 2019; Lopez-Velasco, Tomas-Callejas, Diribsa, Wei, & Suslow, 2013; Micallef et al., 2012; Stine, Song, Choi, & Gerba, 2011; Zheng et al., 2013). For instance, one study (Gu et al., 2018a, Gu et al., 2018b) observed the likelihood of *Salmonella* contamination on tomato leaves was significantly higher than on the tomato fruit in sampled fields. Another set of studies (Bolten et al., 2020; Soto, Chavez, Baez, Martinez, & Chaidez, 2007) found the adjacent leaves and debris could be the main cross-contamination source during harvesting and post-harvest handling; thus, inactivating or reducing *Salmonella* on tomato leaves may be a management practice to reduce contamination downstream. Studies have also observed *Salmonella* can survive and even grow in water containing commercial pesticides and fungicides labeled for tomato production (Danyluk et al., 2008; Gorski et al., 2011; Gu et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2014). While previous studies have evaluated the efficacy of copper, chlorine, and peracetic acid on *Salmonella* mitigation on fresh produce during post-harvest handling and processing (Bolten et al., 2020; Rahn et al., 1992; Silveira et al., 2018; Soto et al., 2007; Zaengle-Barone et al., 2018), little research has examined the effects of pesticides on pre-harvest applications. In addition, washing with commonly used sanitizers (i.e., antimicrobial pesticides) could not eliminate *Salmonella* on inoculated tomatoes, and the primary function of sanitizer in wash water was to minimize cross-contamination during the washing stage (Bolten et al., 2020; Soto et al., 2007). Given that the available post-harvest processing intervention strategies cannot sufficiently be relied on to mitigate *Salmonella* contamination risks, the prioritization of strategies that minimize contamination during pre-harvest (i.e., production) are imperative. However, knowledge of the evaluation of different pre-harvest pesticide applications on *Salmonella*-contaminated tomato plants is still limited. Thus, the objective of this study was to investigate the impact of four commercial pesticides (each with a different mode of action) on *Salmonella* serovar Newport and Typhimurium concentrations on tomato leaves.

## 2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 | *Salmonella* preparation

*Salmonella* serovar Newport strain J1892, isolated from a previous tomato-borne *Salmonella* outbreak, was originally obtained from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; Atlanta, GA). *Salmonella* serovar Typhimurium strain ATCC 14028 was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC; Manassas, VA).

Both bacterial cultures were stored in Luria-Bertani broth (LB; Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA) containing 20% glycerol at  $-80^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Prior to each experiment, bacterial cultures were re-inoculated into LB broth and incubated at  $37^{\circ}\text{C}$ . After overnight growth, the cultures were harvested by centrifugation at  $1,750 \times g$  for 15 min at  $22^{\circ}\text{C}$ . To reach the desired initial bacterial concentration of 8 log CFU/mL, bacterial pellets were re-suspended in 100 mL of phosphate buffered saline (PBS; Thermo Fisher Scientific) to an optical density (600 nm) of 0.3.

## 2.2 | Tomato plant growth

Red round tomato seeds of the cultivar “BHN602” (BHN Seed, Immokalee, FL) were sowed into 128-cell Styrofoam plug trays (Speedling Inc., Sun City, FL) containing Premier Pro-mix HP (Premier Tech Horticulture, Quakertown, PA). Approximately one-month post-seeding, seedlings were transplanted into 30-cm diameter pots containing sandy loam soil collected from agricultural fields at Virginia Tech's Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center (ESAREC; Painter, VA). Transplanted tomato plants were maintained in a BSL-2 greenhouse at the ESAREC. Air temperature in the greenhouse during experiments ranged from  $23$  to  $33^{\circ}\text{C}$ , with an average temperature of  $28^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Water was applied manually to the pots at 2 days intervals and fertilization was applied every 2 weeks using Miracle-Gro Water Soluble Plant Food (The Scotts Company LLC, Marysville, OH). No additional lighting was provided in the greenhouse.

## 2.3 | *Salmonella* inoculation and pesticide applications

The experimental setup is schematically summarized in Figure 1. Inoculation was accomplished 7 weeks after tomato transplanting by dipping three leaflets from each of four branches per plant into an 8 log CFU/mL *Salmonella* suspension with 0.025% (vol/vol) Silwet L-77 surfactant (Momentive Performance Materials, Inc., Waterford, NY) for 30 s, as described in a prior study (Gu, Cevallos-Cevallos, Vallad, & van Bruggen, 2013). Three of the six plants (about 50–80 cm tall) were inoculated with *S. enterica* serovar Newport and the other three with *S. enterica* serovar Typhimurium. Sterile tap water with 0.025% (vol/vol) Silwet L-77 was used as a control. After dip inoculation, leaves were left to air dry until pesticide application (24 h). Two independent experiments were performed in triplicate in a completely randomized design in a BSL-2 greenhouse ( $N = 6$ ).

One day after inoculation, pesticides were applied to tomato plants. Pesticides evaluated for this study included acibenzolar-S-methyl (the active ingredient in Actigard 50WG; Syngenta Crop Protection, LLC, Greensboro, NC), PAA (OxiDate 2.0 L; BioSafe Systems, LLC, East Hartford, CT), copper hydroxide (Kocide 3000 46WG; Certis USA, LLC; Columbia, MD), and streptomycin sulfate (Firewall 17WP; AgroSource, Inc., Tequesta, FL). Pesticides were applied to tomato plants at their maximum allowed application rate according to the

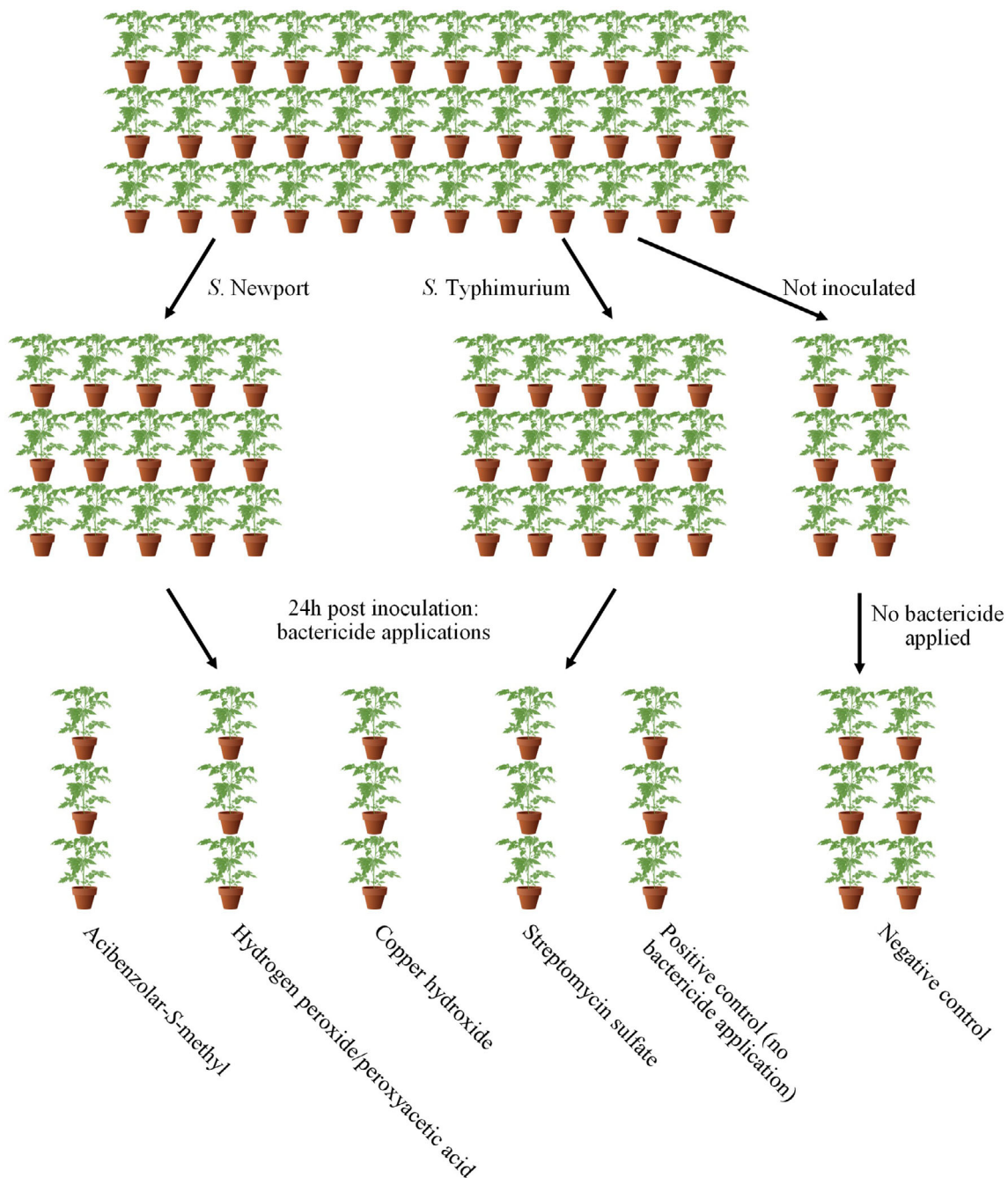
labels. Formulated pesticides were obtained commercially and mixed into sterile DI water. For each treatment, six plants were sprayed using a 710 mL spray bottle (Gempler's Farm & Home Supply Co., Janesville, WI) containing 470 mL and calculated amount of the pesticide to simulate a grower spray output of 935 L/ha (Actigard 50WG @ 27 mg/L, Kocide 3000 46WG @ 985 mg/L, OxiDate 2.0 L @ 2.5% (vol/vol), and Firewall 17WP @ 200 mg/L). Water without pesticides was applied as a control.

## 2.4 | Tomato leaf sampling and *Salmonella* detection

Treated tomato leaflets were sampled at 0.125 (0 day after pesticide application), 2 (1 day after pesticide application), 6 (5 days after pesticide application), and 9 days (8 days after pesticide application) after leaflet inoculation. At each sampling time, three inoculated leaflets were removed from each of the three plants of each treatment. Four 12-mm leaf discs were taken with a sterile cork-borer from each inoculated leaflet, and weighed (g). Two of the four leaf discs were dipped in 1 mL sterile water with 0.025% (vol/vol) Silwet L-77 and sonicated in FS20 Ultrasonic Cleaner (Thermo Fisher Scientific) for 15 min to collect *Salmonella* cells on the surface of inoculated leaves. The other two leaf discs were surface disinfected by dipping the discs in 70% alcohol for 20 s, rinsing three times with sterile distilled water, and ground in 1 mL PBS using sterile micro pestles, as previously described (Gu et al., 2013). The rinsate from sonicated leaf discs and extract of surface disinfected leaf discs were diluted in a 10-fold series in PBS. Aliquots (100  $\mu\text{L}$ ) of the appropriate dilutions were spread onto Xylose Lysine Tergitol-4 agar (XLT-4; BD Biosciences, Franklin Lakes, NJ) and incubated at  $37^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 24 h. *Salmonella* colonies were enumerated using the Neutec Flash & Go automated colony counter (Neutec Group Inc., Farmingdale, NY). *Salmonella* concentrations were determined and expressed in log CFU/mL or log CFU/g, where appropriate. Up to three colonies from each plate were re-streaked on XLT-4 for PCR confirmation targeting the *invA* gene, as previously described (Rahn et al., 1992).

## 2.5 | Statistical analysis

In each of the two trials, a total of 36 tomato plants were tested with six replicates per pesticide treatment (Figure 1). *Salmonella* concentration in the rinsate was used to estimate *Salmonella* on the surface of inoculated leaves and the concentration enumerated from the surface disinfected leaf discs was used to estimate *Salmonella* inside inoculated leaves. Pesticide treatment impact on *Salmonella* concentration was calculated as the log reduction using the equation:  $\log \text{reduction} = \log_{10} (\text{CFU}_{\text{control}} / \text{CFU}_{\text{treatment}})$ . Effects of pesticide application among treatments were analyzed by analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the log reduction. The decline rate (slope) and intercept of *Salmonella* concentration densities on and in inoculated tomato



**FIGURE 1** Schematic presentation of experimental design on *Salmonella enterica* inoculation and pesticide application on tomato leaves. Two independent experiments were performed in triplicate ( $n = 6$ ). For each treatment, 470 mL pesticide was applied with the maximum label concentration of Actigard 50WG at 27 mg/L, Kocide 3000 46WG at 985 mg/L, OxiDate 2.0 L at 2.5% (vol/vol), and Firewall 17WP at 200 mg/L. Water without pesticides was applied as control.

leaves with pesticide treatment were each compared to the control by fitting log-transformed data (separately for each replication) to the linear model as described previously (Kuhar et al., 2020). Estimated values of parameters were subjected to multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Statistical analyses (ANOVA, MANOVA, and linear regression) were performed using SAS (SAS release 9.2, SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC), and differences were considered significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

### 3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Previous studies indicated that *Salmonella* persistence or growth on and in tomato plants may vary by *Salmonella* serovar (Shi, Namvar, Kostrzynska, Hora, & Warriner, 2007; Zheng et al., 2013). However, for the two serovars (Newport and Typhimurium) evaluated in the study reported here, *Salmonella* concentration in leaf rinsate and ground tomato leaves (after surface disinfection) were not

**TABLE 1** Log reduction (mean  $\pm$  SE) of *Salmonella enterica* 24 h (1 day) after pesticide application in rinse water (i.e., rinsate) of inoculated leaves and after surface disinfection (with 70% ethanol) and grounding of inoculated leaves.

Treatment	Reduction in rinse water (log CFU/mL)	Reduction after surface disinfection (log CFU/g)
Control	0.00 $\pm$ 0.07c*	0.00 $\pm$ 0.20bc
Acibenzolar-S-methyl	0.15 $\pm$ 0.11bc	-0.2 $\pm$ 0.10c
Copper hydroxide	0.41 $\pm$ 0.12abc	0.79 $\pm$ 0.16a
Peroxyacetic acid	0.70 $\pm$ 0.24a	0.24 $\pm$ 0.16b
Streptomycin sulfate	0.60 $\pm$ 0.06ab	0.14 $\pm$ 0.09bc

\*Letters in each column denote the significance levels among pesticide treatments ( $p < 0.05$ ).

significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ) at each sampling point; thus, data were grouped for analyses.

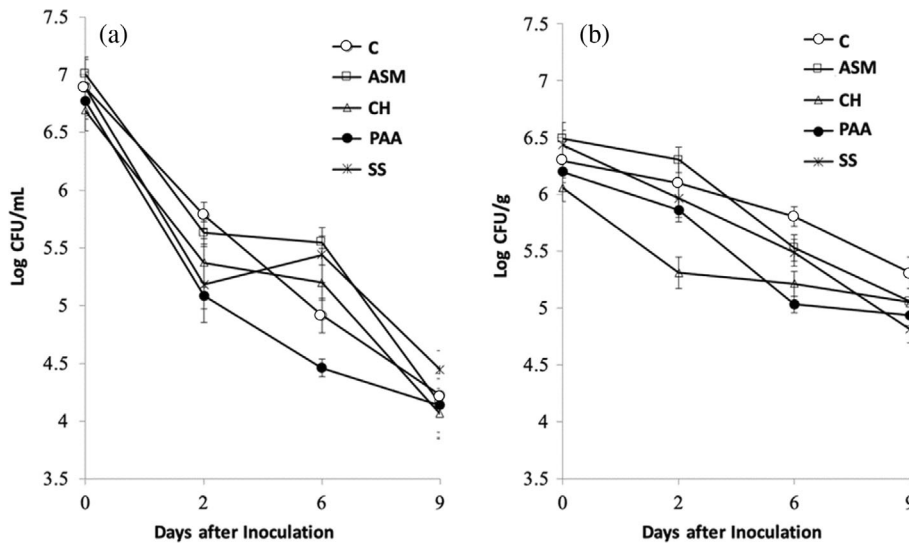
As expected, 1 day after PAA and streptomycin application, the log reduction of *Salmonella* concentrations in leaf rinsate was significantly greater than the inoculated control samples without pesticide application ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) (Table 1). The antibacterial effects of PAA on *Salmonella* have been well-documented for produce postharvest washing (Singh, Kim, Shepherd, Luo, & Jiang, 2011; Yuk, Bartz, & Schneider, 2006); however, the success of streptomycin against *Salmonella* has primarily been limited to a medical treatment strategy as a therapeutic antibiotic for Salmonellosis (Bohnhoff, Drake, & Miller, 1954; Kaiser, Diard, Stecher, & Hardt, 2012; Seligmann, Barash, & Cohlan, 1947). In comparison to *Salmonella* concentrations on tomato leaves, PAA and streptomycin treatments had no effect on *Salmonella* concentrations in ground leaves (Table 1). While PAA does not penetrate plant tissue, it has been shown to exhibit some phytotoxicity in hydroponic tomato operations at 0.5–5 mg/L (Vines, Jenkins, Foyer, French, & Scott, 2003). These effects were not observed in this study, suggesting that its use as a foliar application is less damaging to the plant; however, the lack of reduction in *Salmonella* concentrations in the ground leaves support PAA may be more optimally utilized in surface washing or multi-hurdle approaches (Huang et al., 2018; Lippman, Yao, Huang, & Chen, 2020). In contrast to PAA, streptomycin is considered a partially systemic pesticide (McManus & Stockwell, 2000). The isolation of streptomycin-resistant *Salmonella* from fresh produce and meat products at retail has been increasingly reported (Abatcha, Effarizah, & Rusul, 2018; Peng et al., 2016; Whichard et al., 2010); although, the lack of streptomycin-resistant *Salmonella* has also been reported in pre-harvest environments (Peng et al., 2016). While this study's observation of significant log reductions in *Salmonella* concentrations on tomato leaves was promising, additional research is needed to evaluate multiple pesticide applications at different time-points during tomato pre-harvest production.

Acibenzolar-S-methyl treatment did not significantly reduce *Salmonella* concentrations in leaf rinsate and ground tomato leaves 1 day after application, compared with the control (Table 1;  $p > 0.05$ ). Acibenzolar-S-methyl has been reported to be effective in managing

plant bacterial diseases by stimulating plant defense responses (Takeshita et al., 2013); although, the findings reported here suggest acibenzolar-S-methyl alone did not significantly reduce *Salmonella* concentrations on or in leaf tissue. This is supported by a previous study of acibenzolar-S-methyl's impact on tomato phyllosphere microflora in Virginia (Ottesen et al., 2015); as well as, additional research that showed the use of systemic acquired resistance (SAR) stimulating chemicals were ineffective at preventing *Salmonella* colonization of tomato leaf tissue (Phannareth, 2015). However, a recent study observed the use of acibenzolar-S-methyl as a priming agent could prevent internalized colonization of fresh produce by *Salmonella* (Chalupowicz et al., 2021). Future studies may investigate acibenzolar-S-methyl as an intervention to minimize active internalization using a syringe or vacuum inoculation methods, versus passive internalization methods (as the study here).

A previous study indicated that copper has antibacterial effects against *Salmonella* (Zhu, Elguindi, Rensing, & Ravishankar, 2012); however, in the study reported here, the application of copper hydroxide did not result in a significant reduction of *Salmonella* concentrations on leaf surfaces (Table 1). This finding is supported by existing literature evaluating the use of copper-based compounds against epiphytic *Salmonella* populations (Mahovic et al., 2013; Ottesen et al., 2015). In contrast, *Salmonella* concentration had a significant log reduction in the ground leaves after copper hydroxide treatment, compared to the control ( $0.79 \pm 0.16$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Copper ions ( $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ ) may be able to enter tomato leaves and suppress *Salmonella* inside leaves (Bain, 1902), but the actual mechanism of suppression needs to be investigated further. Additionally, further research should determine copper hydroxide's impact on development of resistance in agricultural systems (Wightwick, Reichman, Menzies, & Allinson, 2013; Yu, Wang, Shen, Fang, & Yu, 2022).

*Salmonella* populations decreased on the surface and in ground inoculated tomato leaves up to 8 days after treatment applications (Figure 2 and Table S1). The linear model used to describe survival of *Salmonella* in leaf rinsate and ground leaf samples explained 90.5% and 89.5% of the observed variation, respectively ( $R^2 = 0.905 \pm 0.470$  and  $0.895 \pm 0.350$ ). Among all treatments, *Salmonella* rates of decline in leaf rinsate and grounded tomato leaves were less than 0.2 and 0.4 log/day, respectively, which were not significantly different, compared to the control ( $p > 0.05$ ). The initial *Salmonella* concentrations after inoculation (0.125 days/3 h) in leaf rinsate and ground tomato leaves were  $6.87 \pm 0.14$  log CFU/mL and  $6.35 \pm 0.13$  log CFU/g, respectively (Figure 2). *Salmonella* concentrations were reduced by up to 2.81 log CFU/mL on the surface, and up to 1.54 log CFU/g in tomato leaves throughout the experiment (Figure 2 and Table S1). This finding was similar to a prior study (Zhao, Silva, Van der Linden, Franco, & Uyttendaele, 2021) that also observed reductions in *Salmonella* on spinach plant and leaf tissues after the use of a biological control agent (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). The results reported here, suggest that a single pesticide application does not eliminate or significantly reduce *Salmonella* concentrations on the surface of or in ground tomato leaves. However, *Salmonella* concentrations did not increase on the surface of or in ground tomato leaves after pesticide



**FIGURE 2** Survival (mean  $\pm$  SE) of *Salmonella enterica* after pesticide application (control [C], acibenzolar-S-methyl [ASM], copper hydroxide [CH], peroxyacetic acid [PAA], streptomycin sulfate [SS]) in (a) leaf rinsate and (b) ground leaves.

application, for up to 8 days. These results suggest that the use of pre-harvest foliar pesticide applications does not increase food safety risks associated with *Salmonella* contamination of tomato plants when foliar pesticides are made using water that is not considered high risk (e.g., surface water). Future studies are needed to examine the effect of multiple applications of a single pesticide, or in combination as a multi-hurdle approach, for reducing potential *Salmonella* contamination, as it is common practice in IPM programs to apply multiple applications of a pesticide, or multiple pesticides with different modes of action during production.

## 4 | CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the effects of commercial pesticides labeled for tomato production on the reduction of *Salmonella* concentrations on the surface of, and in ground inoculated tomato leaves. This study addressed a central question that agricultural industry personnel have queried regarding the efficacy of using existing pesticide applications, as part of IPM programs, for pre-harvest food safety. PAA and streptomycin significantly reduced *Salmonella* concentrations on the surface of inoculated tomato leaves 1 day after treatment, while copper hydroxide significantly reduced *Salmonella* concentrations in the ground tomato leaves, compared to the control. The use of a single application of acibenzolar-S-methyl did not reduce *Salmonella* concentrations in leaf rinsate and ground tomato leaves within 24 h post-treatment. These findings suggest that while some applications of pesticides (e.g., PAA, streptomycin) resulted in reductions of *Salmonella* on tomato leaves, a single in-field pesticide application early in tomato plant production was not an effective intervention for mitigating *Salmonella* contamination in the study reported here. *Salmonella* did not grow on the surface of, or in ground tomato leaves after pesticide application during the 8-days study duration. However, there are some limitations of the study presented here. However, the study presented here inoculated samples at one level (6–7 log CFU/mL) of *Salmonella*, further research investigating various levels is needed to investigate other contamination scenarios.

Additionally, this research was a laboratory study, and may not precisely replicate field conditions; as well as, only a single application of pesticides was applied over the study. Therefore, future research, including multiple in-field pesticide applications or pesticides used in combination with other technologies or management strategies (e.g., cropping schemes), might offer intriguing pre-harvest contamination preventions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was funded, in part, by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). Funding for this work was also provided by the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station and the Hatch Program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the FDA, USDA, and VDACS. Use of a company name or product does not imply approval or recommendation of the product. We would like to thank Christine Waldenmaier for greenhouse and laboratory assistance.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## ORCID

Laura K. Strawn  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9523-0081>

## REFERENCES

- Abatcha, M. G., Effarizah, M. E., & Rusul, G. (2018). Prevalence, antimicrobial resistance, resistance genes and class 1 integrons of *Salmonella* serovars in leafy vegetables, chicken carcasses and related processing environments in Malaysian fresh food markets. *Food Control*, *91*, 170–180.

- Baena, M., Marquez, M., Matres, V., Botella, J., & Ventosa, A. (2006). Bactericidal activity of copper and niobium-alloyed austenitic stainless steel. *Current Microbiology*, 53(6), 491–495.
- Bain, S. M. (1902). *The action of copper on leaves, with special reference to the injurious effects of fungicides on peach foliage: A physiological investigation: University of Tennessee*. Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Barak, J. D., & Liang, A. S. (2008). Role of soil, crop debris, and a plant pathogen in *Salmonella enterica* contamination of tomato plants. *PLoS One*, 3(2), e1657.
- Bell, R. L., Zheng, J., Burrows, E., Allard, S., Wang, C. Y., Keys, C. E., ... Rideout, S. (2015). Ecological prevalence, genetic diversity, and epidemiological aspects of *Salmonella* isolated from tomato agricultural regions of the Virginia eastern shore. *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 6, 415.
- Bennett, S., Littrell, K., Hill, T., Mahovic, M., & Behravesh, C. B. (2015). Multistate foodborne disease outbreaks associated with raw tomatoes, United States, 1990–2010: A recurring public health problem. *Epidemiology and Infection*, 143(7), 1352–1359.
- Bohnhoff, M., Drake, B. L., & Miller, C. P. (1954). Effect of streptomycin on susceptibility of intestinal tract to experimental *Salmonella* infection. *Proceedings of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine*, 86(1), 132–137.
- Bolten, S., Gu, G., Luo, Y., Van Haute, S., Zhou, B., Millner, P., ... Nou, X. (2020). *Salmonella* inactivation and cross-contamination on cherry and grape tomatoes under simulated wash conditions. *Food Microbiology*, 87, 103359.
- Chalupowicz, L., Manulis-Sasson, S., Barash, I., Elad, Y., Rav-David, D., & Brandl, M. (2021). Effect of plant systemic resistance elicited by biological and chemical inducers on the colonization of the lettuce and basil leaf apoplast by *Salmonella enterica*. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*, 87(24), e01151–e01121.
- Danyluk, M., Nozawa-Inoue, M., Hristova, K., Scow, K., Lampinen, B., & Harris, L. (2008). Survival and growth of *Salmonella enteritidis* PT 30 in almond orchard soils. *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, 104(5), 1391–1399.
- Gorski, L., Parker, C. T., Liang, A., Cooley, M. B., Jay-Russell, M. T., Gordus, A. G., ... Mandrell, R. E. (2011). Prevalence, distribution, and diversity of *Salmonella enterica* in a major produce region of California. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*, 77(8), 2734–2748.
- Graves, A., & Alexander, S. (2002). Managing bacterial speck and spot of tomato with acibenzolar-S-methyl in Virginia. *Plant Health Progress*, 3(1), 11.
- Greene, S. K., Daly, E. R., Talbot, E. A., Demma, L. J., Holzbauer, S., Patel, N. J., ... Painter, J. A. (2008). Recurrent multistate outbreak of *salmonella* Newport associated with tomatoes from contaminated fields, 2005. *Epidemiology and Infection*, 136(2), 157–165.
- Gruszynski, K., Pao, S., Kim, C., Toney, D., Wright, K., Ross, P. G., ... Levine, S. (2014). Evaluating wildlife as a potential source of *salmonella* serotype Newport (JJPX 01.0061) contamination for tomatoes on the eastern shore of Virginia. *Zoonoses and Public Health*, 61(3), 202–207.
- Gu, G., Cevallos-Cevallos, J. M., Vallad, G. E., & van Bruggen, A. H. (2013). Organically managed soils reduce internal colonization of tomato plants by *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium. *Phytopathology*, 103(4), 381–388.
- Gu, G., Strawn, L. K., Oryang, D. O., Zheng, J., Reed, E. A., Ottesen, A. R., ... Reiter, M. S. (2018a). Agricultural practices influence *Salmonella* contamination and survival in pre-harvest tomato production. *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 9, 2451.
- Gu, G., Strawn, L. K., Oryang, D. O., Zheng, J., Reed, E. A., Ottesen, A. R., ... Reiter, M. S. (2018b). Reduced bacterial wilt in tomato plants by bactericidal peroxyacetic acid mixture treatment. *The Plant Pathology Journal*, 34(1), 78.
- Gu, G., Strawn, L. K., Zheng, J., Reed, E. A., & Rideout, S. L. (2019). Diversity and dynamics of *Salmonella enterica* in water sources, poultry litters, and field soils amended with poultry litter in a major agricultural area of Virginia. *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 10, 2868.
- Huang, R., de Vries, D., & Chen, H. (2018). Strategies to enhance fresh produce decontamination using combined treatments of ultraviolet, washing and disinfectants. *International Journal of Food Microbiology*, 283, 37–44.
- Jackson, B. R., Griffin, P. M., Cole, D., Walsh, K. A., & Chai, S. J. (2013). Outbreak-associated *Salmonella enterica* serotypes and food commodities, United States, 1998–2008. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 19(8), 1239–1244.
- Jones, J. B., Zitter, T. A., Momol, T. M., & Miller, S. A. (2014). *Compendium of tomato diseases and pests*. APS Press, The American Phytopathological Society.
- Kaiser, P., Diard, M., Stecher, B., & Hardt, W. D. (2012). The streptomycin mouse model for *Salmonella* diarrhea: Functional analysis of the microbiota, the pathogen's virulence factors, and the host's mucosal immune response. *Immunological Reviews*, 245(1), 56–83.
- Krug, M., Valadez, A., Chapin, T., Schneider, K., & Danyluk, M. (2020). Outbreaks of foodborne illnesses associated with tomatoes: FSHN12-08/FS192, 6/2020 (Vol. 2020, p. 5). IFAS Extension. Available at: [http://www.corrugated.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/Package\\_Cleanliness/Pathogen\\_Transfer\\_Research\\_d.pdf](http://www.corrugated.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/Package_Cleanliness/Pathogen_Transfer_Research_d.pdf)
- Kuhar, T. P., Hastings, P. D., Hamilton, G. C., VanGessel, M. J., Johnson, G. C., Wyenandt, C., & Vuuren, V. M. (2020). 2020–2021 Mid-Atlantic Commercial Vegetable Recommendations. Available at: <https://www.udel.edu/content/dam/udellimages/canr/pdfs/extension/sustainable-agriculture/commercial-veg-recommendations/NFP-2020-1IntroTOC.pdf>
- Lippman, B., Yao, S., Huang, R., & Chen, H. (2020). Evaluation of the combined treatment of ultraviolet light and peracetic acid as an alternative to chlorine washing for lettuce decontamination. *International Journal of Food Microbiology*, 323, 108590.
- Lopez-Velasco, G., Tomas-Callejas, A., Diribsa, D., Wei, P., & Suslow, T. (2013). Growth of *Salmonella enterica* in foliar pesticide solutions and its survival during field production and postharvest handling of fresh market tomato. *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, 114(5), 1547–1558.
- Lynch, M. F., Tauxe, R. V., & Hedberg, C. W. (2009). The growing burden of foodborne outbreaks due to contaminated fresh produce: Risks and opportunities. *Epidemiology and Infection*, 137(3), 307–315.
- Mahovic, M., Gu, G., & Rideout, S. (2013). Effects of pesticides on the reduction of plant and human pathogenic bacteria in application water. *Journal of Food Protection*, 76(4), 719–722.
- Mari, M., Bertolini, P., & Pratella, G. (2003). Non-conventional methods for the control of post-harvest pear diseases. *Journal of Applied Microbiology*, 94(5), 761–766.
- McManus, P., & Stockwell, V. (2000). *Antibiotics for plant diseases control: Silver bullets or rusty sabers*. APSnet Features. Available at: <https://www.apsnet.org/edcenter/apsnetfeatures/Pages/AntibioticsForPlants.aspx>
- Micallef, S. A., Goldstein, R. E. R., George, A., Kleinfelder, L., Boyer, M. S., McLaughlin, C. R., ... Kothary, M. H. (2012). Occurrence and antibiotic resistance of multiple *Salmonella* serotypes recovered from water, sediment and soil on mid-Atlantic tomato farms. *Environmental Research*, 114, 31–39.
- Miller, S. A., Ferreira, J. P., & LeJeune, J. T. (2022). Antimicrobial use and resistance in plant agriculture: A one health perspective. *Agriculture*, 12(2), 289.
- Ottesen, A. R., Gorham, S., Pettengill, J. B., Rideout, S., Evans, P., & Brown, E. (2015). The impact of systemic and copper pesticide applications on the phyllosphere microflora of tomatoes. *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, 95(5), 1116–1125.
- Peng, M., Salaheen, S., Almario, J. A., Tesfaye, B., Buchanan, R., & Biswas, D. (2016). Prevalence and antibiotic resistance pattern of *Salmonella* serovars in integrated crop-livestock farms and their products sold in local markets. *Environmental Microbiology*, 18(5), 1654–1665.
- Phannareth, T. (2015). *Salmonella-induced systemic acquired resistance in tomato and its impact on salmonella colonization of tomato leaves*. (Thesis). University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

- Potnis, N., Soto-Arias, J. P., Cowles, K. N., van Bruggen, A. H., Jones, J. B., & Barak, J. D. (2014). *Xanthomonas perforans* colonization influences *Salmonella enterica* in the tomato phyllosphere. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*, 80(10), 3173–3180.
- Rahn, K., De Grandis, S. A., Clarke, R. C., McEwen, S. A., Galan, J. E., Ginocchio, C., ... Gyles, C. L. (1992). Amplification of an *invA* gene sequence of *Salmonella typhimurium* by polymerase chain reaction as a specific method of detection of *Salmonella*. *Molecular and Cellular Probes*, 6(4), 271–279.
- Ritchie, D. (2004). *Copper-containing fungicides/bactericides and their use in management of bacterial spot on peaches* (Vol. 4, p. 1). Southeast Region News & Publications.
- Sargent, S. A., Ritenour, M., Brecht, J., & Bartz, J. (2000). *Handling, cooling and sanitation techniques for maintaining postharvest quality: University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service*. Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Available at: <http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/IR/00/00/16/76/00001/CV11500.pdf>
- Scallan, E., Hoekstra, R. M., Angulo, F. J., Tauxe, R. V., Widdowson, M. A., Roy, S. L., ... Griffin, P. M. (2011). Foodborne illness acquired in the United States—Major pathogens. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 17(1), 7–15.
- Seligmann, E., Barash, L., & Cohan, S. Q. (1947). Streptomycin treatment of *Salmonella enteritis* in infants. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 30(2), 182–187.
- Shi, X., Namvar, A., Kostrzynska, M., Hora, R., & Warriner, K. (2007). Persistence and growth of different *Salmonella* serovars on pre-and postharvest tomatoes. *Journal of Food Protection*, 70(12), 2725–2731.
- Silveira, L. O., do Rosário, D. K. A., Giori, A. C. G., Oliveira, S. B. S., da Silva Mutz, Y., Marques, C. S., ... Bernardes, P. C. (2018). Combination of peracetic acid and ultrasound reduces *Salmonella typhimurium* on fresh lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* L. var. *crispa*). *Journal of Food Science and Technology*, 55(4), 1535–1540.
- Singh, R., Kim, J., Shepherd, M. W., Luo, F., & Jiang, X. (2011). Determining thermal inactivation of *Escherichia coli* O157: H7 in fresh compost by simulating early phases of the composting process. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*, 77(12), 4126–4135.
- Sisquella, M., Casals, C., Viñas, I., Teixidó, N., & Usall, J. (2013). Combination of peracetic acid and hot water treatment to control postharvest brown rot on peaches and nectarines. *Postharvest Biology and Technology*, 83, 1–8.
- Soto, M., Chavez, G., Baez, M., Martinez, C., & Chaidez, C. (2007). Internalization of *Salmonella typhimurium* into mango pulp and prevention of fruit pulp contamination by chlorine and copper ions. *International Journal of Environmental Health Research*, 17(6), 453–459.
- Stine, S. W., Song, I., Choi, C. Y., & Gerba, C. P. (2011). Application of pesticide sprays to fresh produce: A risk assessment for hepatitis A and *Salmonella*. *Food and Environmental Virology*, 3(2), 86–91.
- Takeshita, M., Okuda, M., Okuda, S., Hyodo, A., Hamano, K., Furuya, N., & Tsuchiya, K. (2013). Induction of antiviral responses by acibenzolar-s-methyl against cucurbit chlorotic yellows virus in melon. *Phytopathology*, 103(9), 960–965.
- Truitt, L. N., Vazquez, K. M., Pfuntner, R. C., Rideout, S. L., Havelaar, A. H., & Strawn, L. K. (2018). Microbial quality of agricultural water used in produce preharvest production on the eastern shore of Virginia. *Journal of Food Protection*, 81(10), 1661–1672.
- Vines, J., Jenkins, P., Foyer, C., French, M., & Scott, I. (2003). Physiological effects of peracetic acid on hydroponic tomato plants. *Annals of Applied Biology*, 143(2), 153–159.
- Whitchard, J. M., Medalla, F., Hoekstra, R. M., McDermott, P. F., Joyce, K., Chiller, T., ... White, D. G. (2010). Evaluation of antimicrobial resistance phenotypes for predicting multidrug-resistant *salmonella* recovered from retail meats and humans in the United States. *Journal of Food Protection*, 73(3), 445–451.
- Wightwick, A. M., Reichman, S. M., Menzies, N. W., & Allinson, G. (2013). Industry wide risk assessment: A case study of Cu in Australian vineyard soils. *Water, Air, & Soil Pollution*, 224(12), 1–8.
- Yu, S., Wang, Y., Shen, F., Fang, H., & Yu, Y. (2022). Copper-based fungicide copper hydroxide accelerates the evolution of antibiotic resistance via gene mutations in *Escherichia coli*. *Science of the Total Environment*, 815, 152885.
- Yuk, H. G., Bartz, J. A., & Schneider, K. R. (2006). The effectiveness of sanitizer treatments in inactivation of *Salmonella* spp. from bell pepper, cucumber, and strawberry. *Journal of Food Science*, 71(3), M95–M99.
- Zaengle-Barone, J. M., Jackson, A. C., Besse, D. M., Becken, B., Arshad, M., Seed, P. C., & Franz, K. J. (2018). Copper influences the antibacterial outcomes of a  $\beta$ -lactamase-activated prochelator against drug-resistant bacteria. *ACS Infectious Diseases*, 4(6), 1019–1029.
- Zhao, X., Silva, M. B. R. d., Van der Linden, I., Franco, B. D., & Uyttendaele, M. (2021). Behavior of the biological control agent *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *aizawai* ABTS-1857 and *Salmonella enterica* on spinach plants and cut leaves. *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 135, 626029.
- Zheng, J., Allard, S., Reynolds, S., Millner, P., Arce, G., Blodgett, R. J., & Brown, E. W. (2013). Colonization and internalization of *salmonella enterica* in tomato plants. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*, 79(8), 2494–2502.
- Zhu, L., Elguindi, J., Rensing, C., & Ravishanker, S. (2012). Antimicrobial activity of different copper alloy surfaces against copper resistant and sensitive *salmonella enterica*. *Food Microbiology*, 30(1), 303–310.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

**How to cite this article:** Gu, G., Murphy, C. M., Hamilton, A. M., Zheng, J., Nou, X., Rideout, S. L., & Strawn, L. K. (2023). Effect of pesticide application on *Salmonella* survival on inoculated tomato leaves. *Journal of Food Safety*, e13043. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfs.13043>