

Research Article

Quantitative Analysis of Fat-Soluble Vitamins in Feed Additives Using an In-House Developed and Validated HPLC Method

Hosain MZ^{1**}, Islam SMS^{1#}, Kamal MM¹ and Rahman MM²

¹Quality Control Laboratory, Department of Livestock Services, Bangladesh

²Department of Environmental Sciences, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

[#]These authors contributed equally to this work

***Corresponding author:** Hosain MZ, Quality Control Laboratory, Department of Livestock Services, Savar, Dhaka-1343, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Quantification of vitamins in complex matrices such as feed additives is a time-consuming analytical procedure. In this study, a simple and precise in-house High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) method was developed and validated for the simultaneous detection and quantification of four fat-soluble vitamins such as vitamin A, D₃, E, and K₃ in feed additives. The HPLC method was developed and validated using reversed-phase column chromatography. The chromatographic separation of the vitamins was carried out at 25°C temperature on a reverse-phase C18 column using a binary gradient pump mode. Mobile phase constituents were solvent (a): deionized water and (b) methanol. Detection was performed with HPLC ultraviolet/visible detection set at 325, 265, 230, and 254 nm wavelength for vitamin A, D₃, E, and K₃ respectively. The flow rate was 1.0mL/min and the total run time was 20min. The method was validated according to the guidelines of the International Conference on Harmonization (ICH) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA), USA, and acceptance criteria for system suitability, specificity, linearity, accuracy, and precision were met in all the cases. The Relative Standard Deviation (RSD) for system suitability and precision was <2% for all the studied vitamins. The linearity of the calibration curves was excellent (R²>0.999) at concentrations of 2.5, 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 15.0, and 20.0 µg/mL for all vitamins, and the range of linearity of this method was 0.0-50.0 µg/mL with R2 value greater than 0.999. The limits of detection values were 0.0022, 0.0012, 0.0022, and 0.0020 µg/mL for vitamin A, D₃, E, and K₃, respectively, and the limits of quantification values were 0.0066, 0.0038, 0.0066, and 0.0061 µg/mL for vitamin- A, D₃, E, and K₃ respectively. The recovery percentages ranged from 85% to 103%, and the robustness of the method is also high with excellent reproducibility. The overall parameters of the proposed method met the validation criteria and this method could be a precise and highly desirable analytical procedure for accurate quantification of four fat-soluble vitamins such as A, D₃, E, and K₃ in feed additives using a single chromatographic run.

Keywords: Fat-soluble vitamins; Feed additive; HPLC; Method development & Validation

Introduction

Vitamins are a heterogeneous group of organic compounds and an essential component of feed additives that impact the feed presentation, hygiene, digestibility, intestinal health, and are required for the normal functioning of the animal body [1-5]. As a component of feed additives, fat-soluble vitamins such as vitamins- A, D₃, E, and K₃ are extensively used in livestock production, especially in the modern poultry farm and livestock industry [3,6]. The deficiency of these vitamins leads to a serious malfunction in various organs and systems in the body that could seriously affect animal performance by decreasing the growth rate or increasing the incidence of reproductive failures and other abnormalities [7-9]. Therefore, the body needs a continuous supply of well-balanced fat-soluble vitamins to prevent deficiency symptoms and maintain normal body function. Therefore, the control of fat-soluble vitamins in feed formulations is really important.

Quantitative analysis of vitamins from composite sample like feed additives is still a challenge and cumbersome analytical procedure for the analysts due to the highly reactive nature of vitamins and quantitative isolation of each component [10-12] in the mixed formulation. Several methods have been reported such as ultraviolet/visible (UV/Vis) spectrophotometry, fluorimetry, chemiluminescence, capillary electrophoresis, thin-layer chromatography, and liquid chromatography with different conditions for the determination of each component of fat-soluble vitamins in different matrices [13,14].

The liquid chromatography technique has been widely applied for the analysis of fat-soluble vitamins in different matrices with some drawbacks like longer retention time, low reproducibility, lower accuracy, and sophisticated mobile preparation with longer column equilibration, and the total run time of the analysis [14]. Because of the intricate composition and unstable nature of vitamins, the extraction and analysis procedure of the fat-soluble vitamins in feed additive

is a boring and troublesome act; sometimes, a special procedure is required to get the analyte contained in the sample matrix, and their experimental procedures are also time-consuming and cost value is high due to a large number of reagents and organic solvents [15]. However, a few validated methods [16] available for the for combined detection and quantification of all fat-soluble vitamins feed additives. Hence, there is a need for simple, rapid, fit-for-purpose methods that can easily be used for routine quality analysis of the feed additives.

Therefore, the present study aimed to develop and validate a simple and precise HPLC technique for the simultaneous detection and quantification of four fat-soluble vitamins like vitamin-A (retinol), vitamin-D₃ (cholecalciferol), vitamin-E (alpha-tocopherol), and vitamin-K₃ (menadione) in the complex compound like feed additives.

Materials and Methods

Chemicals and reagents

Methanol (HPLC grade), concentrated ammonia, and authorized reference standard of Vitamin D₃ (cholecalciferol) (Lot: LRAC6497) employed in this study were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (Darmstadt, Germany), Vitamin A acetate (retinol) (Code: DRE-CA17923820, Lot: G1127532) was purchased from LGC, Germany, and Vitamin K₃ (Menadione) (Code: M0300000, Batch: 1.4, ID: 00 GhBU), and Vitamin-E(alpha-tocopherol acetate) (Code: T1600000, Batch: 10.0, ID: 0077yJ) were purchased from European Pharmacopoeia Reference Standard, Council of Europe, EDQM CS 30026F-67081, Strasbourg, Cedex. Double deionized (DI) water utilized in this study was obtained from a water deionization plant (ePure-D4642-33, Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA). All solutions were sonicated and filtered through a 0.45µm filter employing a vacuum filtration unit (Welch, Pall Scientific, USA) before use.

Instrumentation and Chromatographic Conditions

The high-performance liquid chromatographic system (Prominence, Shimadzu, Japan) equipped with UV-VIS detector, binary gradient pump mode, and Lab Solution data processing software was used in this study. HPLC column Shim-pack GIST (5µM C18, 4.6 X 150 mm), P/N: 227-30017-07, S/N: 18L09240 (Shimadzu, Japan) was used for the separation of vitamins. The optimized chromatographic conditions used in this study were shown in Table 1. The whole chromatography was performed at ambient temperature.

Preparation of standard solution

Stock standard solution of 1000µg/mL was prepared by weighing 10mg of the vitamin-A, vitamin-D₃, vitamin-E, and vitamin-K₃ in a 10mL amber color volumetric flask separately, and diluted to volume with HPLC grade methanol. These solutions were used as reference stock standard solutions and kept in a refrigerator at -20°C for further use. Intermediate standard solutions of 100µg/mL of each vitamin were prepared from stock standard solution in methanol. Mixed working standard solutions of the studied vitamins were prepared daily from intermediate standard solutions. Before injecting into the liquid chromatography system, the standard solutions were filtered through a 0.45µm Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) syringe filter.

Preparation of sample solution

Weighed accurately about 8.0gm of sample in a 50mL amber color

volumetric flask. Added 6.0mL of concentrated ammonia and heat at 80°C in a hot water bath for 2minutes with shaking. Allowed to cool to at 20°C temp in cold water bath and volume with methanol and sonicated for 1.0min at room temperature. Then the sample solution was filtered through Whatman no.1 filter paper. Further diluted 5mL of the filtrated solution to 50mL methanol and mixed well. Again, filtered the sample solution with a 0.45µm PTFE syringe filter and transferred to the sample vial and immediately stored the sample vial in the refrigerator for 5min before analysis.

Method validation parameters

Method validation of the present study was performed by measuring the essential parameters of the validation process like system suitability, specificity, linearity, range, accuracy, precision, Limits of Detection (LOD), Limits of Quantification (LOQ), and robustness. The validation parameters were evaluated using recommended guidelines of the International Conference on Harmonization (ICH) [17] and also the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [18-19].

System suitability: The system's suitability was evaluated by six replicate (n=6) analyses of an aqueous mixture of all vitamin standards. The acceptance limit of the various parameters for system suitability of the procedure is calculated in step with the rules of ICH and FDA where the acceptance criteria are the percentage of relative standard deviation (RSD) for retention time, Peak Area (PA), and height is <2%, the number of Theoretical Plates (TP) over 2000, Tailing Factor (TF), and Peak Resolution (RS) are >1.5.

Specificity: The specificity of the assay method was investigated by injecting the standard of the target concentration (10µg/mL) in the extracted placebo to demonstrate the absence of interference with the elution of target the analyte.

Linearity and range: To evaluate the linearity, six mixture standards of vitamin-A, vitamin-D₃, vitamin-E, and vitamin-K₃ at 25, 50, 75, 100, 150, and 200% of target concentration (10µg/mL) were prepared and a linear equation was established for each vitamin by plotting the peak area versus the concentrations. Three calibration curves were acquired on three consecutive days with a specified standard concentration of the studied vitamin. Linearity was calculated by running six standard mixtures of each vitamin, at final concentrations of 2.5, 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 15.0, and 20.0 µg/mL. The range of the linearity of this method was 0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 2.5, 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 15.0, 20.0, 30.0, and 50.0 µg/mL at final concentrations of each vitamin.

Accuracy: The accuracy of the study was performed by estimating the percent of the recovery. To carry out the recovery spiked samples were prepared at three concentrations (50%, 100%, and 150% of the target analyte) of each vitamin in the pre-analyzed formulation blank matrix. Three individually prepared replicates at each concentration were analyzed and the recovery percent of each vitamin was calculated using the formula: recovery (%) = (amount obtained/amount spiked) ×100.

Precision: The precision of the method was estimated based on repeatability and intermediate precision. The repeatability was calculated on the results obtained on the same day for six independent standard mixer solutions of the target concentration (10µg/mL) of the analyte and the intermediate precision was assessed by calculating the repeatability at three concentration levels (50%, 100%, 150%) of the

Table 1: Optimized chromatographic conditions.

Parameters	Conditions
Stationary Phase (column)	Shim-pack GIST (5 μ M C18, 4.6 X 150 mm),
Mobile Phase	Methanol: Water (98:2)
Pump Mode	Binary gradient
Flow Rate (mL/min)	1.0 ml
Run time (minutes)	20
Auto Sampler Temperature ($^{\circ}$ C)	4
Column Temperature ($^{\circ}$ C)	25
Injection Volume (μ L)	20
Detection Wavelength (nm)	Vitamin-K ₃ : 254
	Vitamin-A: 325
	Vitamin-D ₃ : 265
	Vitamin-E: 230
Peak Identification	Vitamin-K ₃ : 1 st
	Vitamin-A: 2 nd
	Vitamin-D ₃ : 3 rd
	Vitamin-E: 4 th

target concentration (10 μ g/mL) of the analyte by two analysts on two different days. The percentage of RSD was calculated for evaluating the precision of this study.

Limit of detection (LOD) & Limit of quantification (LOQ): The lowest qualitative and quantitative concentrations of the obtained linearity range were calculated for every vitamin in keeping with the guidelines of ICH- 2000. The LOD and LOQ of this study were determined using the formula: $k \times S.D/b$, where $k=3.3$ for the LOD and 10 for the LOQ, S.D = the standard deviation of the intercept, and b =slope of the calibration curve.

Robustness: The robustness of the method was evaluated by analyzing the same standards (15 μ g/mL) with small but deliberate variations in method parameters such as column temperature, injection volume, and flow rate and performed in triplicate. The percentage of Relative Standard Deviation (RSD) was calculated for estimating the robustness of this study, and the acceptance criteria are the percentage of RSD for the peak area is <2%.

Statistical analysis: The data obtained in this study were analyzed with the software Lab Solution and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 16 statistical package by one-way analysis of variance, and in regression analysis, the least square method was performed.

Table 2: System suitability parameters of the proposed method.

Vitamin	Theoretical plates	Tailing factor	Resolution	Reproducibility		
				% RSD of RT	% RSD of Peak Area	% RSD of Height
Vitamin-A	28618	1.198	6.747	0.068	0.149	0.208
Vitamin-D ₃	29903	1.185	5.316	0.05	0.139	0.195
Vitamin-E	31903	1.201	10.538	0.012	0.183	0.176
Vitamin-K ₃	20779	1.291	1.667	0.126	0.148	0.197

RSD=Relative standard deviation

Results and Discussion

This study reveals the development and validation of a definite analytical method where the validation criteria [16-18] are met in all the cases. Typical chromatograms of the standard solution and the actual feed additive sample are shown in Figure 1a and b, respectively. The elution of fat-soluble vitamins through the analytical column occurs in an exceedingly specific order and in groups that depend on their chemical properties [20]. The retention time of those four fat-soluble vitamins was as follows: 5.18 \pm 0.01 min (Vitamin-A I), 8.10 \pm 0.01 min (Vitamin-D₃), 15.32 \pm 0.01 min (Vitamin-E), and 2.33 \pm 0.01 min (Vitamin-K₃). The system suitability parameters (Table 2) show that the percentage of RSD for retention time, peak area, and height is <2%, the number of TP is over 2000, and TF and RS are >1.5, indicating that the values are within the required limits of the validation process [17-19]. The specificity test results (Figure 1 and Table 3) of the assay method demonstrates the absence of interference with the elution of vitamin-A, vitamin-D₃, vitamin-E, and vitamin-K₃ in the extracted placebo. From the linearity of Figure 2 and Table 4, it is found that all of the vitamins maintain excellent linearity ($R^2>0.999$) within the concentration range of 2.5-20.0 μ g/mL. The range of linearity of this method was 0.0-50.0 μ g/mL with an R^2 value greater than 0.999. The accuracy of the method was determined by recovery percentage and the values of all the vitamins are between 85% and 103% (Table 5), which suggests that the method is accurate and also indicates that the commonly used excipients present in the feed additive formulations are not interfering the proposed method. The precision for the method and analyst was evaluated which are shown in Tables 6a and 6b. The results demonstrate that the RSD value for both cases is <1%, which indicates that the proposed method has excellent reproducibility.

The LOD for vitamin-A, vitamin-D₃, vitamin-E, and vitamin-K₃

Table 3: Specificity test report.

Sample Name		Retention Time (min)	Peak area
Reagent Blank Solution		Nil	Nil
Matrix blank solution		Nil	Nil
Vitamin-A	Std-10 μ g/mL	5.18	1788496
	Std-spiked-10 μ g/mL		1673090
Vitamin-D ₃	Std-10 μ g/mL	8.1	657231
	Std-spiked-10 μ g/mL		614431
Vitamin-E	Std-10 μ g/mL	15.33	182731
	Std-spiked-10 μ g/mL		183321
Vitamin-K ₃	Std-10 μ g/mL	2.33	1539365
	Std-spiked- 10 μ g/mL		1492475

Table 4: Regression parameters of analyzed fat-soluble vitamins (regression coefficient, R^2) in calibration curves.

Vitamin	Regression coefficient		
	1 st day	2 nd day	3 rd day
Vitamin-A	$R^2=0.9994$	$R^2=0.9995$	$R^2=0.9995$
Vitamin-D ₃	$R^2=0.9996$	$R^2=0.9996$	$R^2=0.9996$
Vitamin-E	$R^2=0.9995$	$R^2=0.9995$	$R^2=0.9994$
Vitamin-K ₃	$R^2=0.9996$	$R^2=0.9996$	$R^2=0.9996$

Table 5: Accuracy test report.

Vitamin	Spike % of the target conc.	Spiked conc. ($\mu\text{g/g}$)	Obtained conc. ($\mu\text{g/g}$)			Average obtained conc. ($\mu\text{g/g}$)	Average recovery %
			1 st Day	2 nd Day	3 rd Day		
Vitamin-A	50	5	4.94	4.94	4.91	4.93	98.59
	100	10	9.5	9.54	9.48	9.5	95.04
	150	15	12.5	12.42	13.28	12.74	84.9
Vitamin-D ₃	50	5	4.93	4.94	4.9	4.92	98.49
	100	10	9.46	9.49	9.44	9.46	94.63
	150	15	13.61	13.54	13.78	13.64	90.95
Vitamin-E	50	5	5.13	5.22	5.12	5.16	103.15
	100	10	9.98	10.02	9.95	9.98	99.84
	150	15	15.5	15.47	15.29	15.42	102.8
Vitamin-K ₃	50	5	5.13	5.18	5.21	5.18	103.51
	100	10	9.8	9.89	9.87	9.85	98.51
	150	15	14.77	14.79	15.29	14.95	99.66

is found to be 0.0022, 0.0012, 0.0022, and 0.0020 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ respectively, and the LOQ for vitamin-A, vitamin-D₃, vitamin-E, and vitamin-K₃ is found to be 0.0066, 0.0038, 0.0066, and 0.0061 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ respectively (Table 7). The robustness of the method was evaluated which is demonstrated in Table 8. The percentage of RSD for the peak area

Table 6a: Precision under repeatability conditions (n=6).

Vitamin	Retention time % RSD	Area % RSD	Height % RSD
Vitamin-A	0.068	0.149	0.208
Vitamin-D ₃	0.05	0.139	0.195
Vitamin-E	0.012	0.183	0.176
Vitamin-K ₃	0.126	0.148	0.197

RSD=Relative standard deviation

Table 6b: Intermediate precision.

Analyte	Day	First analyst			Second analyst		
		Area % RSD (5 $\mu\text{g/mL}$)	Area % RSD (10 $\mu\text{g/mL}$)	Area % RSD (15 $\mu\text{g/mL}$)	Area % RSD (5 $\mu\text{g/mL}$)	Area % RSD (10 $\mu\text{g/mL}$)	Area % RSD (15 $\mu\text{g/mL}$)
Vitamin-A	Day-1	0.394	0.368	0.168	0.509	0.416	0.279
	Day-2	0.605	0.436	0.337	0.357	0.424	0.279
Vitamin-D ₃	Day-1	0.395	0.522	0.142	0.59	0.296	0.265
	Day-2	0.608	0.472	0.346	0.464	0.269	0.284
Vitamin-E	Day-1	0.698	0.355	0.11	0.305	0.587	0.343
	Day-2	0.523	0.286	0.248	4.02	0.595	0.34
Vitamin-K ₃	Day-1	0.331	0.42	0.093	0.842	0.422	0.17
	Day-2	0.649	0.526	0.4	0.479	0.22	0.315

Table 7: Limit of detection (LOD) & Limit of quantification (LOQ).

Vitamin	LOD ($\mu\text{g/mL}$)	LOQ ($\mu\text{g/mL}$)
Vitamin-A	0.0022	0.0066
Vitamin-D ₃	0.0012	0.0038
Vitamin-E	0.0022	0.0066
Vitamin-K ₃	0.002	0.0061

LOD=Limits of detection, LOQ=Limits of quantification

of all the studied vitamins is <2%, which indicates that the method is robust.

Some HPLC methods have been published concerning the simultaneous determination of vitamins, but most of the methods are hectic [21] and unable to quantify all the fat-soluble vitamins simultaneously. Although, some stable methods were [22,23] reported for the simultaneous quantification of four fat-soluble vitamins in infant formula and milk powder they are incompetent to analyze feed additives. Few studies mention the methods of MS-MS detector [24,25], which involves specific and expensive equipment that is not available in all laboratories for routine analysis of these four fat-soluble vitamins. The method we developed and validated is more precise with good specificity, linearity, precision, and high accuracy that met all the criteria of the validation parameters (Table 9). The robustness of the method is also good. The easy sample extraction procedure and simultaneous quantification of four water-soluble vitamins in a single chromatographic run make the procedure more convenient. Thus, the developed method could be a useful and precise analytical technique for simultaneous detection and quantification of four fat-soluble vitamins in routine and quality analysis of feed additives that have a wide range of applications in modern livestock production.

Conclusion

In this study, an accurate analytical method has been developed and validated using a reverse-phase HPLC for the rapid and reliable analysis of fat-soluble vitamins in complex feed additives. Due to the easy sample preparation, short analytical time, and simple mobile phase composition containing water and methanol make the method more economical and suitable for the qualitative and quantitative analysis of fat-soluble vitamins in feed additives. The accuracy, precision, and robustness of the proposed method are also high enough with high excellent recovery and reproducibility; that met the

Table 8: Robustness test report.

Conditions	Parameters			Peak Area % RSD			
	Temperature (°C)	Injection Volume (µL)	Flow rate (mL/min)	Vitamin-A	Vitamin-D ₃	Vitamin-E	Vitamin-K ₃
NC	25	20	1	0.412	0.528	0.243	0.479
VC-01	29	20	1	0.463	0.402	0.288	0.809
VC-02	20	20	1	0.266	0.37	0.23	0.358
VC-03	25	21	1	0.326	0.389	0.469	0.243
VC-04	25	19	1	0.643	0.616	0.554	0.683
VC-05	25	20	1.1	0.428	0.126	0.431	0.57
VC-06	25	20	0.9	1.098	1.103	0.916	1.083

NC= Normal Condition, VC= Varied Condition

Table 9: Summary of acceptance criteria [17-19] of the validation process and obtained results.

Parameters	Acceptance criteria	Obtained results	Table/Figure
System suitability	For retention time, peak area, and height: RSD≤1%	RSD<0.2 %	
	Theoretical Plates (TP)≥2000	TP>20000	
	Tailing Factor (TF)≤2	TF<1.3	
	Resolution factor (Rs)≥2	Rs>2.0	Table 2
Specificity	The excipient compounds must not interfere with the analysis of the targeted analyte.	Chromatography shows- (i) the existence of peak area in standard solutions and real sample (ii) Absence of peak area in blank and matrix solutions	Table 3
Linearity	R ² > 0.999	R ² > 0.9994	Table 4
Range	25, 50, 75, 100, 150, and 200% of target concentration (10µg/mL)	0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 2.5, 5.0, 7.5, 10.0, 15.0, 20.0, 30.0, and 50.0 µg/mL	-
Accuracy	Recovery should be between 80-120 % of the target concentration	85-103 %	Table 5
Precision Repeatability/Reproducibility precision	RSD≤2 %	Repeatability: RSD<0.2% Intermediate precision: RSD<0.7%	Table 6 a, and b
Limit of Detection (LOD)	Concentration of 3:1 signal to noise ratio	Vitamin-A-0.0022µg/mL Vitamin-D ₃ -0.0012µg/mL Vitamin-E-0.0022µg/mL Vitamin-K ₃ -0.0020µg/mL	Table 7
Limit of Quantification (LOQ)	3.3 x Limit of detection	Vitamin-A-0.0066µg/mL Vitamin-D ₃ -0.0038µg/mL Vitamin-E-0.0066µg/mL Vitamin-K ₃ -0.0061µg/mL	Table 7

criteria of the validation process. Therefore, this method could be a validated analytical procedure for accurate quantification of vitamin A, D₃, E, and K₃ in multi-component feed additives using a single chromatographic run and might be a simple and precise technique to assess the standard and quality of the feed additives intended to be used for increased livestock production.

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