



# Morphometric study of red blood cells in non-descriptive cattle with respect to age and sex

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## Abstract

The present study was conducted to investigate the influence of age (calf, young and adult) and sex (female and castrated male) on the morphometry (mean length and mean breadth) of red blood cells (RBCs) of non-descriptive cattle. Blood samples were collected from each non-descriptive cattle with respect to age and sex by jugular venipuncture and collected in EDTA vials. Then, blood smears were prepared on grease-free microscopic slides then air-dried, fixed on methanol, and stained with Giemsa stain for morphometric study. The morphometric study was done with the help of the ocular micrometer and stage micrometer under 40X objective. Since there was no previous report on comparative morphometrical analyses of castrated males and female ND cattle of Odisha, an attempt has been taken to undertake this particular study. For both mean length and breadth, no significant difference was there among the different age groups of female cattle. Highly significant differences ( $p < 0.001$ ) were observed between the mean length of RBCs of male calves with young castrated males and adult males. For mean breadth of RBCs, a highly significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) was there between the male calves and male adults. A highly significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) was there between the mean length of RBCs of the male calves with the mean length of RBCs of the young females. Therefore, age and sex have a profound effect on the morphometry of RBCs in non-descriptive cattle. Therefore, careful attention must be done in studying and interpretation of anemic conditions on the basis of size.

**Keywords** Calves · Youngs · Adults · Length · Breadth

## Introduction

Erythrocytes or red blood cells (RBCs) provide vital functions of oxygen transport, carbon dioxide transport, and buffering of hydrogen ions (Harvey 2008, 2010). The mature red blood cell (RBC) of the adult bovine is biconcave in shape (Kramer 2000; Harvey 2001; Barger 2010), has minimal central pallor, and has a width of 5–6  $\mu\text{m}$  and a relatively long lifespan of approximately 130 days (Wood and Quiroz-Rocha 2010). Variation in sizes of erythrocytes is known as anisocytosis (Thrall 2012) which is mild to moderate in ruminants. The shape of a RBC is relatively uniform, but poikilocytosis is not unusual in blood smears of apparently healthy calves (Okabe et al. 1996). Morphology of cells has recently been

indicated as a powerful indicator of cellular function (Lobo et al. 2015). The geometry of the cell has long fascinated biologists (Thompson 1917). Quantifying morphology of cell is fundamental to the statistical study of cell populations, and can help unravel mechanisms underlying cell and tissue morphogenesis (Sánchez-Corrales et al. 2018). Since there was no previous report on comparative morphometrical analyses of RBCs of castrated male and female ND cattle (Fig. 1) of Odisha, an attempt has been taken to undertake this particular study. Since comparative study on morphometrical parameters, i.e., RBCs of non-descriptive (ND) cattle with respect to age and sex are inadequate and to study the influence of age and sex on the morphometry of red blood as well as to interpret the anemic syndromes on the basis of size especially concerning the normocytic, macrocytic, and microcytic anemias; the present study is undertaken. Various authors have studied the influence of age (Adilli et al. 2013; Dash and Mohanty 2015), sex (Adilli et al. 2013), and breed (Adilli et al. 2014; Dash and Mohanty 2015) on the morphometry of RBCs.

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**Fig. 1** Castrated non-descriptive cattle

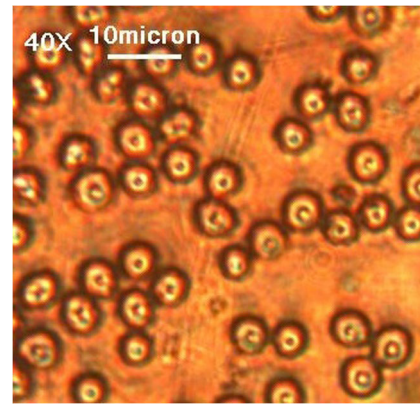
## Materials and methods

### Blood samples collection

ND female and castrated male cattle each having three different age groups, that is, calves, young and adult were taken for this study. After disinfecting the sampling area, blood samples were taken from the jugular vein (Sastry 1983; Brar et al. 2002; Ledieu 2003) of each animal by a skilled veterinary expert. Dry and sterilized needles (Dispo Van Single Use Needle, Hindustan Syringes & Medical Devices Ltd., Faridabad, India) and dry syringes (Dispo Van Single Use Syringe, Hindustan Syringes & Medical Devices Ltd., Faridabad, India) were used for collection of blood (Sastry 1983) and collected in EDTA (ethylene diamine tetra acetic acid) vials. Slides were precisely identified according to their respective age and sex.

### Blood smears preparation, staining, and morphometric study

In the laboratory, smears were prepared on grease-free microscopic slides, air-dried, then fixed with methanol, and stained with Giemsa stain prepared from Giemsa powder (Qualigens CAS NO.51811-82-6 Product NO. 39382, scientific India Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, Maharashtra, India) as protocol cited by Lillie (1977). For several and even until the last years, morphometric studies of RBCs are essentially based on linear measures of erythrocyte size. For the morphometric study of erythrocytes, the ocular micrometer and an objective micrometer was used (Dash and Mohanty 2015). The entire data (30



**Fig. 2** Red blood cells

observations) per age group of each sex were subjected for morphometrical analyses by using an ocular micrometer that was standardized against a stage micrometer (ERMA TOKYO, Japan made) using a standard light microscope (LABOSCOPE MICROSCOPES Research microscope M.No. BD-08 B, S. No. 21320 Mfg. by B.D. INSTRUMENTATION, Ambala Cantt, India) under 40X objective. Circumference and surface area of erythrocytes were calculated by using the formula  $2\pi r$  and  $\pi r^2$  respectively.

### Photomicrography

Photomicrography of blood cells was done by a CC130-1.3 mega pixel microscopic camera (Mfg. by Catalyst Biotech, Maharashtra, India) connected to a microscope (LABOSCOPE MICROSCOPES Research microscope M. No. BD-08 B, S. No. 21320 Mfg. By B.D. INSTRUMENTATION, Ambala Cantt, India) under 40X objective.

### Statistical analyses

Each parameter is expressed as mean and standard error mean for all age groups and sex, and Microsoft Office Excel 2007 was used for statistical analyses. Data analyses for comparison were done with the help of Paleontological Statistics (PAST) version 2.17 (Natural History Museum, University of Oslo)

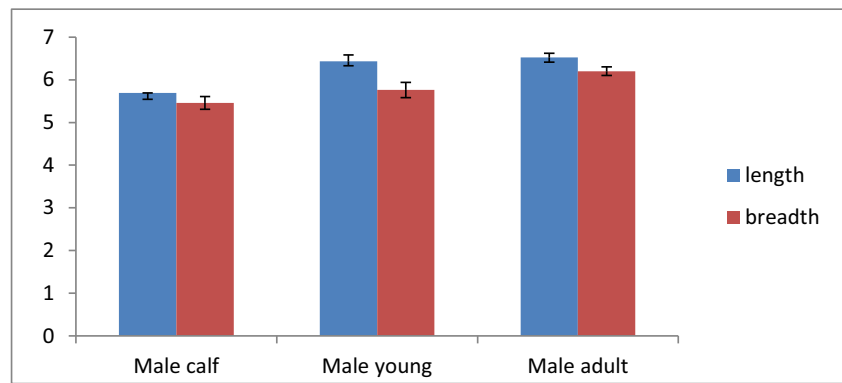
**Table 1** Effect of age on morphometry of RBCs of male ND cattle

Parameters	Male calf (n = 30)	Male young (n = 30)	Male adult (n = 30)	F value
Length	5.69 <sup>a</sup>	6.43 <sup>a</sup>	6.52 <sup>a</sup>	10.34**
SEM	0.15	0.10	0.11	
Breadth	5.46 <sup>a</sup>	5.76	6.20 <sup>a</sup>	8.053**
SEM	0.15	0.18	0.10	

Same lowercase superscript letters in the same row differ significantly at  $p < 0.001$

\*\*Means highly significant at  $p < 0.001$

**Fig. 3** Effect of age on the morphometry of RBCs of male ND cattle



for one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey’s pair-wise comparison tests. Differences were classified as significant at  $p < 0.05$  and highly significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

### Results and discussion

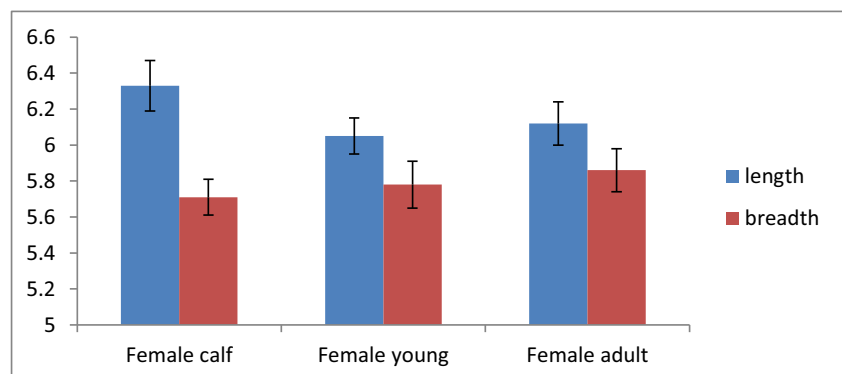
The erythrocytes observed were biconcave in shape (Fig. 2) and the morphometry (length and breadth) were measured in micrometer (µm). The influence of age on the male ND cattle is shown (Table 1). Among the males, the highest mean length of RBCs was observed in adult males ( $6.52 \pm 0.11$ ) and the lowest was observed in male calves ( $5.69 \pm 0.15$ ); the highest mean breadth was observed in male adults ( $6.20 \pm 0.10$ ) and the lowest was observed in male calves ( $5.46 \pm 0.15$ ) (Fig. 3). The influence of age on the female ND cattle is shown (Table 2). Among the females, the highest mean length was observed in female calves ( $6.33 \pm 0.14$ ) and the lowest was observed in female young (s) ( $6.05 \pm 0.10$ ); the highest mean breadth was observed in female adults ( $5.86 \pm 0.12$ ) and the lowest was observed in female calves ( $5.71 \pm 0.10$ ) (Fig. 4). The influence of both age and sex were shown (Table 3). Among the three age groups of both males and females, the highest mean length of RBCs was observed in adult males ( $6.52 \pm 0.11$ ) and the lowest was observed in male calves ( $5.69 \pm 0.15$ ); the highest mean breadth was observed in adult

**Table 2** Effect of age on morphometry of RBCs of female ND cattle

Parameters	Female calves (n = 30)	Female youngs (n = 30)	Female adults (n = 30)	F value
Length	6.33	6.05	6.12	1.251 NS
SEM	0.14	0.10	0.12	
Breadth	5.71	5.78	5.86	0.3979 NS
SEM	0.10	0.13	0.12	

NS means not significant

**Fig. 4** Effect of age on the morphometry of RBCs of female ND cattle

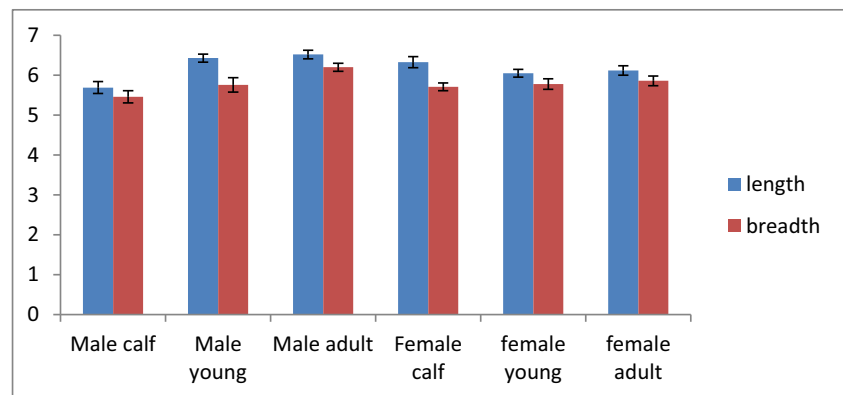


**Table 3** Effect of age and sex on the morphometry of RBCs of ND cattle

Parameters	Male calves (n = 30)	Male youngs (n = 30)	Male adults (n = 30)	Female calves (n = 30)	Female youngs (n = 30)	Female adults (n = 30)	F value
length	5.69 <sup>a</sup>	6.43 <sup>a</sup>	6.52 <sup>a</sup>	6.33	6.05 <sup>a</sup>	6.12	5.027**
SEM	0.15	0.10	0.11	0.14	0.10	0.12	
breadth	5.46 <sup>a</sup>	5.76	6.20 <sup>a</sup>	5.71	5.78	5.86	3.749**
SEM	0.15	0.18	0.10	0.10	0.13	0.12	

Same lowercase superscript letters in the same row differ significantly at  $p < 0.001$

\*\*Means highly significant at  $p < 0.001$

**Fig. 5** Effect of both age and sex on the morphometry of RBCs of ND cattle

males ( $6.20 \pm 0.10$ ) and the lowest was observed in male calves ( $5.46 \pm 0.15$ ) (Fig. 5). For both the mean length and breadth, no significant difference was there among the different age groups of female cattle. A highly significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) was observed between the mean length of RBCs of the male calves with young castrated males and adult males. For the mean breadth of RBCs, a highly significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) was there between the male calves and male adults. A highly significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) was there between the mean length of RBCs of the male calves with the mean length of the female youngs.

The surface area was measured in  $\mu\text{m}^2$ . The influence of age on the male ND cattle is shown (Table 4). Among the males, the highest mean circumference of RBCs was observed in adult males ( $20.48 \pm 0.37$ ) and the lowest was observed in

**Table 4** Effect of age on circumference and surface area of RBCs of male ND cattle

Parameters	Male calves	Male youngs	Male adults	F value
Circumference	17.89 <sup>a</sup>	20.22 <sup>a</sup>	20.48 <sup>a</sup>	10.34**
SEM	0.47	0.34	0.37	
Area	26.01 <sup>a</sup>	32.81 <sup>a</sup>	33.71 <sup>a</sup>	11.28**
SEM	1.25	1.13	1.27	

Same lowercase superscript letters in the same row differ significantly at  $p < 0.001$

\*\*Means highly significant at  $p < 0.01$

the male calves ( $17.89 \pm 0.47$ ); the highest mean surface area was observed in the male calves ( $26.01 \pm 1.25$ ). The influence of age on the female ND is shown (Table 5). Among the females, the highest mean circumference of RBCs was observed in the female calves ( $19.89 \pm 0.44$ ) and the lowest was observed in the female youngs ( $19.00 \pm 0.33$ ); the highest mean surface area was observed in the female calves ( $31.95 \pm 1.66$ ) and the lowest was observed in the female youngs ( $29.02 \pm 0.92$ ). The influence of both age and sex on the mean circumference and surface area were shown (Table 6). Among the three age groups of both males and females, the highest mean circumference of RBCs was observed in adult males ( $20.48 \pm 0.37$ ) and the lowest was observed in male the calves ( $17.89 \pm 0.47$ ); the highest mean surface area was observed in the young males ( $32.81 \pm 1.13$ ) and the lowest was observed in the male calf ( $26.01 \pm 1.25$ ). For both the mean

**Table 5** Effect of age on circumference and surface area of RBCs of female ND cattle

Parameters	Female calves	Female youngs	Female adults	F value
Circumference	19.89	19.00	19.23	1.25 NS
SEM	0.44	0.33	0.38	
Surface area	31.95	29.02	29.80	1.71 NS
SEM	1.66	0.92	0.99	

NS means not significant

**Table 6** Effect of age and sex on circumference and surface area of RBCs of ND cattle

Parameters	Male calves	Male youngs	Male adults	Female calves	Female youngs	Female adults	F value
Circumference	17.89	20.22 <sup>a</sup>	20.48 <sup>a</sup>	19.89 <sup>a</sup>	19.00	19.23	5.02**
SEM	0.47	0.34	0.37	0.44	0.33	0.38	
Surface area	26.01	32.81 <sup>a</sup>	33.71 <sup>a</sup>	31.95 <sup>a</sup>	29.02	29.80	5.19**
SEM	1.25	1.13	1.27	1.66	0.92	0.99	

Same lowercase superscript letters in the same row differ significantly at  $p < 0.001$

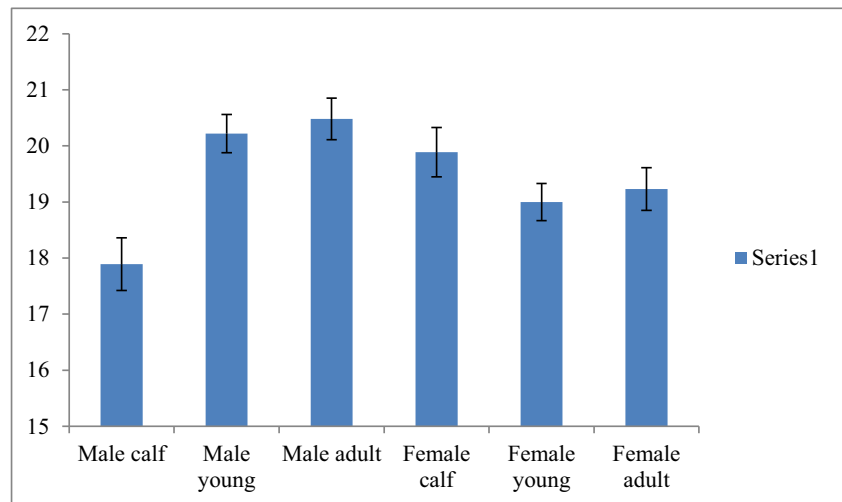
\*\*Means highly significant at  $p < 0.001$

circumference and surface area, no significant difference was there among the different age groups of female cattle. Highly significant differences ( $p < 0.001$ ) were observed between the mean circumference and surface of RBCs of the male youngs, male adults, and female calves (Figs. 6 and 7).

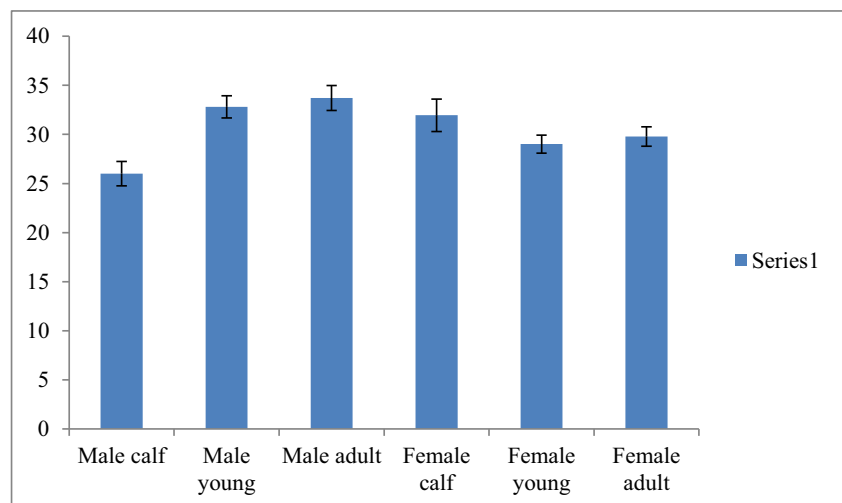
A process which stops the functions of the testes leading to sterilization is known as castration (Carlson 1996). Several non-genetic factors including castration, i.e., removal of testis

affecting hematological parameters of farm animals have been observed (Svoboda et al. 2005; Fisher et al. 2001). The castrated animals showed clinical macrocytic anemia, i.e., increased MCV which will make them be more susceptible to severe anemia than intact goats which might prove fatal thereafter (Olaifa 2018). Castration has been shown to elicit physiological stress, inflammatory reactions (indicated by acute-phase proteins), behavior associated with pain, suppression of

**Fig. 6** Effect of both age and sex on the circumference of RBCs of ND cattle



**Fig. 7** Effect of both age and sex on the surface area of RBCs of ND cattle



immune function, and a reduction in performance (Molony et al. 1995; Fisher et al. 1996, 1997; Ahmed and Ahmed 2011) to varying degrees. Various authors have studied the effects of surgical castration on serum enzymes and plasma proteins (Robertson et al. 1994; Oyeyemi et al. 2000; Mohammad et al. 2008)

Anisocytosis are seen in different age groups. According to some authors (Harvey et al. 1984; Brun-Hansen et al. 2006; Aoki and Ishii 2012), age can be considered when establishing the reference values in domestic animals. According to Schlam and Carlson (1982), Harvey et al. (1984), Meinkoth and Clinkenbeard (2000), and Harvey (2008), fetal erythrocytes are larger than those of adults. During gestation and at birth, the erythron compartment increases; at birth, 9 % of the RBCs are reticulocytes (McGrath and Palis 2008). Fetal calf RBCs are less fragile and larger than adult bovine RBCs (Harvey et al. 1984). The increasing of erythrocyte diameter with an increase in age in castrated male ND cattle observed in our study could be interpreted by the persistence of RBCs after parturition formed during embryonic life and decreasing of the diameter or length by the stem cell adaptation to new conditions of life after parturition (Adilli et al. 2013). Age (Harvey et al. 1984; Brun-Hansen et al. 2006; Aoki and Ishii 2012; Dash and Mohanty 2015; Dash et al. 2015), sex (Shaikat et al. 2013), breed (Dash and Mohanty 2015; Dash et al. 2015), exercise (Aceña et al. 1995; Zobra et al. 2011), pregnancy and lactation (Masoni et al. 1985; Roy et al. 2010; Mariella et al. 2014), and emotional states are variables to be taken in account when establishing reference values in domestic animals. Age, sex, exercise, and emotional states are variables to be considered when establishing reference values in domestic cattle (Adams et al. 1992; Aceña et al. 1995; Brun-Hansen et al. 2006; Mohri et al. 2007; George et al. 2008; Kapale et al. 2008). The breed can affect the diameter of erythrocytes in cattle (Adilli et al. 2014).

## Conclusion

Age and sex have a profound effect on the morphometry of red blood cells of non-descriptive cattle, and this study can provide a baseline reference to which further studies may be compared. By this study, interpretation of anemic syndromes in non-descriptive cattle can be well understood which will helpful for a veterinarian for proper diagnosis and interpretation of diseases as blood plays a vital role for the regulation of the physiological condition of an organism.

## Compliance with ethical standards

**Ethical approval** The investigation followed guidelines for the care and use of animals.

**Conflict of interest** The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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