Effects of oil spill responses on key Arctic zooplankton species

The copepod Calanus glacialis is a key species in the Arctic ecosystem. Increased shipping and oil and gas activities in the Arctic increase the risk of an oil spill. It is therefore important to study the potential consequences of an oil spill on this key species in the Arctic marine ecosystems. As a part of a large joint industry initiative (www.arcticresponsetechnology.org) a first of its kind mesocosm experiment was executed in an Arctic fjord of the Island of Svalbard. Effects of natural attenuation of the oil, in-situ burning and chemical dispersion were studied on grazing, egg production and hatching of the Arctic copepod Calanus glacialis. Eight mesocosms with open top and bottom were deployed in the sea ice in Van Mijenfjorden, Svalbard, in February 2015. Two replicates were used for all treatments. After application, surface ice was allowed to re-establish. Water was collected from the top 2 cm water column in March and just before sea ice break up in May, and was used in two 14-day incubation experiments with C. glacialis collected in Isfjorden. Copepods were fed during the experiment and eggs and pellets were quantified daily. Egg hatching was determined in the beginning and end of the experiment. There was no significant effect of the oil spill treatments on average cumulated specific pellet production or egg hatching success. However in May, the average cumulated specific egg production was significantly higher in the dispersed oil treatment compared to the control from day 2 (+169 %) until the end of the experiment (+41 %)

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Contributors: Toxvaerd, K. U., Hansen, P. H., Köhler, E., Pancic, M., Hatlebakk, M., Eide, H. O., Søreide, J. E., Nielsen, T. G., Hjorth, M.
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