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**ETHYLENE SYNTHESIS INHIBITOR AFFECTS  
POSTHARVEST KIWIFRUIT QUALITY**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Applied Science**

at

Massey University

Palmerston North

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**Jose Roberto Marques**

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*to*

*Anna Luisa,*

*my precious little 'kiwi' girl,*

*and her mother, great little woman,*

*Cris*

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## ABSTRACT

Firmness is a key quality criteria of kiwifruit and changes significantly during fruit ripening, with premature softening being a serious commercial problem for the industry. Ethylene is involved in regulation of fruit ripening and influences a number of processes, including ethylene production, respiration rate and changes in firmness. Kiwifruit is very sensitive to ethylene, which increases fruit softening rate and reduces storage potential. Aminoethoxyvinylglycine (AVG), an inhibitor of ACC synthase, a key enzyme in the pathway for ethylene biosynthesis, has been applied to horticultural crops, especially apples, in an attempt to regulate ethylene synthesis and its mediated processes, with a number of positive effects including reduced fruit ethylene production, reduced respiration rate, and slower softening rate.

The effects of AVG (500 and 1000 mg.l<sup>-1</sup> a.i., or 200 and 400 g.acre<sup>-1</sup> a.i.) applied to 'Hayward' kiwifruit vines (6 and 4 weeks before commercial harvest) on ethylene production, respiration rate, firmness and soluble solids content of fruit at harvest and after coolstorage were investigated. Kiwifruit treated with either 500 or 1000 mg.l<sup>-1</sup> AVG 4 weeks before commercial harvest and maintained at 20 °C over 15 days, had a lower respiration rate, reduced ethylene production, a slower softening rate, and lower SSC than control fruit immediately after harvest and following 14 days at 0 °C, with the differences generally becoming significant after 6 days at 20 °C. These attributes are generally stimulated by ethylene, indicating that the endogenously produced ethylene was inhibited by the applied AVG, resulting in a slower fruit ripening rate at 20 °C.

However, AVG effects were transitory. There were generally no differences in the above fruit variables between AVG-treated and control fruit at 20 °C up to 20 days following 30, 52, and 80 days at 0 °C. After 110 and 180 days at 0 °C, kiwifruit treated with either 500 or 1000 mg.l<sup>-1</sup> AVG 4 weeks before commercial harvest and maintained at 20 °C up to 10 days, had a higher respiration rate, increased ethylene production, and accelerated softening compared with control fruit. There were basically no differences in any of the

above fruit variables between the treatments 500-AVG-6 and control, either immediately after harvest or following storage at 0 °C up to 180 days.

The short term effect of AVG in kiwifruit during and after coolstorage and the questionable efficiency of AVG uptake in kiwifruit are issues to be further addressed before any practical application can be recommended.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
LIST OF PLATES.....	xiv
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Economic Importance of Kiwifruit.....	1
1.2 Preharvest Factors Affecting Postharvest Fruit Quality .....	2
1.4.1 Crop Genetics .....	2
1.2.2 Climate .....	3
1.2.3 Nutrient and Water Management .....	4
1.2.4 Cultural Management .....	5
1.2.5 Diseases .....	7
1.2.6 Bioregulators .....	7
1.2.7 Maturity (Time of Harvest) .....	8
1.3 Postharvest Factors Affecting Fruit Quality .....	10
1.3.1 Physical Damage .....	10
1.3.2 Storage Conditions .....	10
1.3.3 Postharvest Diseases.....	11
1.3.4 Postharvest Losses.....	12



---

1.4	Fruit Development and Physiology of Kiwifruit .....	14
1.4.1	Composition and Morphology .....	14
1.4.2	Maturation and Ripening .....	15
1.4.3	Softening .....	16
1.5	Ethylene .....	22
1.5.1	Biosynthesis in Higher Plants .....	22
1.5.2	Role in Fruit Ripening .....	24
1.5.3	Ethylene and Kiwifruit .....	26
1.6	AVG .....	28
1.6.1	Action in Plant Tissues .....	28
1.6.2	Application in Horticultural Crops .....	29
1.7	Objective .....	32
2	MATERIAL AND METHODS .....	33
2.1	Field Activities .....	33
2.1.1	Treatment Application .....	33
2.1.2	Harvesting .....	34
2.1.3	Postharvest Operations .....	34
2.1.4	Cool Storage .....	35
2.2	Laboratory Activities .....	35
2.2.1	Carbon Dioxide Production .....	36
2.2.2	Fruit Ethylene Production .....	37
2.2.3	Fruit Firmness .....	38
2.2.4	Fruit Total Soluble Solids Content .....	39
2.3	Statistical Analysis .....	39

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3	RESULTS.....	43
3.1	Fruit Respiration (CO <sub>2</sub> Production).....	43
3.2	Fruit Ethylene Production.....	48
3.3	Fruit Firmness.....	53
3.1	Destructive Firmness Measurement ('Texture Analyser') .....	53
3.2	Non-destructive Firmness Measurement ('Kiwifirm').....	58
3.4	Fruit Total Soluble Solids Content.....	61
4	DISCUSSION.....	65
4.1	General Results.....	66
4.2	Low Temperature Effects in Fruit Physiology.....	69
4.3	Fruit Ethylene Production and Softening .....	71
4.4	Use of AVG in Kiwifruit and Suggested Future Research.....	72
5	REFERENCES.....	75
	APPENDIX I.....	94
	APPENDIX II.....	95
	APPENDIX III.....	96

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 - Flesh firmness and SSC of 'Hayward' kiwifruit grown in 2 locations (A and B) at harvest and after 6 months at 0 °C (Mitchell <i>et al.</i> 1992).....	9
Table 1.2 - Postharvest losses of kiwifruit in New Zealand (Source: Anonymous 1997b). .....	13
Table 1.3 - Inhibition of ethylene synthesis (%) in apple plugs by AVG (0.1 mM) in relation to temperature (°C) (Mattoo <i>et al.</i> 1977). ....	29
Table 1.4 – Pre and postharvest effects of AVG on apple cultivars.....	31
Table 2.1 – Measurement time (days) of fruit variables at 20 °C, after successive removals from 0 °C. ....	36
Table 3.1 – CO <sub>2</sub> production (nmol.kg <sup>-1</sup> .s <sup>-1</sup> ) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per removal time. .....	44
Table 3.2 – CO <sub>2</sub> production (nmol.kg <sup>-1</sup> .s <sup>-1</sup> ) of kiwifruit. Average values of 4 to 5 measurements at 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 60 to 75 fruit per treatment per removal time (pooled data).....	46
Table 3.3 – Ethylene production (pmol.kg <sup>-1</sup> .s <sup>-1</sup> ) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per removal time. ....	50
Table 3.4 - Ethylene production (pmol.kg <sup>-1</sup> .s <sup>-1</sup> ) of kiwifruit. Average values of 4 to 5 measurements at 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 60 to 75 fruit per treatment per removal time (pooled data):.....	51
Table 3.5 – Loss of firmness (%) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 at 0 °C. Means of 60 fruit per removal time from all treatments. Different letters indicate significant difference between removal times. ....	55

---

Table 3.6 – Firmness (N) of kiwifruit. Average values of 4 to 5 measurements at 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 60 to 75 fruit per treatment per removal time (pooled data).....	56
Table 3.7 – Firmness (‘Kiwifirm’ unit) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per removal time. ....	59
Table 3.8 – Firmness (‘Kiwifirm’ unit) of kiwifruit. Average values of 4 to 5 measurements at 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 60 to 75 fruit per treatment per removal time (pooled data).....	60
Table 3.9 – Soluble solids content (%) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per removal time. ....	62
Table 3.10 – Soluble solids content (%) of kiwifruit. Average values of 4 to 5 measurements at 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 60 to 75 fruit per treatment per removal time (pooled data).....	64

---

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1.1 - Schematic representation of postharvest softening of kiwifruit in relation to the timing of key events in the process (MacRae & Redgwell 1992).....18
- Figure 1.2 - The major pathway of ethylene biosynthesis in higher plants and the enzymes involved (Fluhr & Mattoo 1996).....23
- Figure 3.1 – CO<sub>2</sub> production (nmol.kg<sup>-1</sup>.s<sup>-1</sup>) of kiwifruit during 13 days at 20 °C immediately after harvest. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time. Bar represents overall LSD (least significant difference).....43
- Figure 3.2 – CO<sub>2</sub> production (nmol.kg<sup>-1</sup>.s<sup>-1</sup>) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means from all treatments of 60 fruit per removal time. Bar represents overall LSD (least significant difference). Means with the same letter are not significantly different.....45
- Figure 3.3 - CO<sub>2</sub> production (nmol.kg<sup>-1</sup>.s<sup>-1</sup>) of kiwifruit at 20 °C for up to 15 days, after 14 and 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time. Bars represent overall LSD (least significant difference). .....47
- Figure 3.4 – Ethylene production (pmol.kg<sup>-1</sup>.s<sup>-1</sup>) of kiwifruit during 13 days at 20 °C immediately after harvest. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time. Values plotted on logarithmic scale. Bar represents overall LSD (least significant difference).....48
- Figure 3.5 – Number of fruit that exceeded 0.1 µl.l<sup>-1</sup> ethylene production per sampling time during 13 days at 20 °C immediately after harvest. Total of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time. ....49
- Figure 3.6 – Percent of fruit from each time of removal from 0 °C that exceeded 4.5 pmol.kg<sup>-1</sup>.s<sup>-1</sup> (about 0.1 µl.l<sup>-1</sup>) ethylene production of kiwifruit at 20 °C for up to 20 days (4 to 5 measurements), following storage for up to 180 at 0 °C. Total of 60 to 75 fruit per treatment per removal time. ....52

- 
- Figure 3.7 – Firmness (N) of kiwifruit during 13 days at 20 °C immediately after harvest. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time. Bar represents overall LSD (least significant difference).....53
- Figure 3.8 – Firmness (N) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per removal time. Bars represent LSD (least significant difference) at each removal time.....54
- Figure 3.9 – Firmness (N) of kiwifruit at 20 °C for up to 20 days at harvest (A) or following storage at 0 °C for 14 (B), 30 (C), and 52 (D) days. Bar indicates overall LSD (least significant difference).....57
- Figure 3.10 – Firmness ('Kiwifirm' unit) of kiwifruit during 13 days at 20 °C immediately after harvest. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time. Bar represents overall LSD (least significant difference).....58
- Figure 3.11 – Firmness ('Kiwifirm' unit) of kiwifruit during 15 days at 20 °C after 14 days storage at 0 °C. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time.....60
- Figure 3.12 - Soluble solids content (%) of kiwifruit during 13 days at 20 °C immediately after harvest. Means of 15 fruit per treatment per sampling time. Bar represents overall LSD (least significant difference).....61
- Figure 3.13 – SSC (%) of kiwifruit on removal to 20 °C following storage for up to 180 days at 0 °C. Means from all treatments of 60 fruit per removal time. Bar represents overall LSD (least significant difference). Means with the same letter are not significantly different.....63

**LIST OF PLATES**

Plate 2.1 – The ‘Texture Analyser’ fitted with a 7.9 mm diameter probe, material testing machine used for measuring fruit firmness destructively. ....41

Plate 2.2 – The ‘Kiwifirm’, device used for measuring fruit firmness non-destructively. ....42