

1 **Heterogeneities in infection outcomes across species: examining sex and tissue differences** 2 **in virus susceptibility**

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11 12 13 **Abstract**

14
15 Species vary in their susceptibility to pathogens, and this can alter the ability of a pathogen
16 to infect a novel host. However, many factors can **generate heterogeneity in infection**
17 **outcomes**, obscuring our ability to understand pathogen emergence. **Such heterogeneities**
18 **can alter the consistency of responses across individuals and host species. For example,**
19 **sexual dimorphism in susceptibility means males are often intrinsically more susceptible**
20 **than females (although this can vary by host and pathogen).** Further, we know little about
21 whether the tissues infected by a pathogen in one host are the same in another species, and
22 how this relates to the harm a pathogen does to its host. Here, we first take a comparative
23 approach to examine sex differences in susceptibility across 31 species of Drosophilidae
24 infected with Drosophila C Virus (DCV). We found a strong positive inter-specific correlation
25 in viral load between males and females, with a close to 1:1 relationship, suggesting that
26 susceptibility **to DCV** across species is not sex specific. Next, we made comparisons of the
27 tissue tropism of DCV across seven species of fly. We found differences in viral load between
28 the tissues of the seven host species, but no evidence of tissues showing different patterns
29 of susceptibility in different host species. We conclude that, in this system, patterns of viral
30 infectivity across host species are robust between males and females, and susceptibility in a
31 given host is general across tissue types.

32 33 **Introduction**

34
35 Emerging pathogens often arise from a host shift event – where a pathogen jumps into and
36 establishes in a novel host species. Species vary in their susceptibility to pathogens, but little
37 is known about the factors underlying **this variation**, and whether differences between
38 clades are due to the same or different factors [1, 2]. Understanding this is critical for
39 determining which hosts pathogens are likely to jump between, and the harm they cause to
40 their hosts. The host phylogeny has been shown to be an important determinant of host
41 shifts in a range of systems [3-8] as well as being important for understanding how pathogen
42 virulence may change when a pathogen finds itself in a new host [9, 10]. For example,
43 virulence tends to increase, and onward transmission and pathogen load decrease, with
44 greater evolutionary distance between donor and recipient hosts [10-12]. In addition,

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55 clades of closely related species tend to have similar levels of susceptibility independent
56 from their distance to the pathogens natural host [4, 9].

57

58 However, such patterns of susceptibility across species can be affected by heterogeneities in
59 infection outcomes. These can be viewed at the level of the individual heterogeneities
60 within species, and by looking at whether these heterogeneities are consistent or different
61 across host species. Experimental studies typically try and minimise within species or
62 environmental effects. Often overlooked is variation arising from sexual dimorphism, as
63 typically only one sex is utilized to remove between sex differences [13]. Sexual dimorphism
64 is seen across most animal systems in a range of life history traits from body size, growth
65 rate, reproductive effort and immunity [14-16]. In mammals, males and females often differ
66 in their pathogen burdens and mortality rates [17]. For example, in SARS-COV-2 infection in
67 humans, women have a lower risk of morbidity and mortality than men [18]. In HIV infected
68 individuals, women have up to 40% lower HIV viral RNA in circulation but a greater
69 likelihood of developing AIDS than men with matched viral loads [19]. Sexually transmitted
70 infections – which are primarily transmitted between the sexes – are particularly prone to
71 sex biased infection through either exposure differences or sex biased virulence [20-22]. Sex
72 biases in parasitism rates in mammals have been suggested to be due to males investing in
73 traits that favour their reproductive success, which trade off against somatic maintenance,
74 including immunity. In support of this, sex biased parasitism is positively correlated with
75 sexual size dimorphism [17]. In insects a comparative analysis found the degree of sex
76 biased parasitism and mortality is explained by an interaction between the mating system
77 (polygynous vs non-polygynous) and sexual size dimorphism [23]. This difference is
78 consistent with parasites having a greater impact on the survival of male insects compared
79 to females (particularly in polygynous species where males are larger than females). Other
80 hypotheses suggest that as longevity is a major determinant of female fitness, investment in
81 costly immune responses are more important than for males, who can maximise their fitness
82 with shorter term mating success [24]. As such, investment in reproduction may trade-off
83 with immunity in different ways between males and females. There is some support for this
84 hypothesis in mammals but a lack of supporting data for insects [15]. However, many
85 experimental studies of host-parasite interactions do not compare differences between
86 sexes [13]. Furthermore, for most pathogens we have little understanding of whether sex
87 differences are consistent across host species, which has important implications for our
88 understanding of pathogen emergence.

89

90 Despite phylogenetic patterns of host susceptibility having been observed in a range of
91 systems [3, 6-8], we know little about why species vary in their susceptibilities. For example,
92 given equal exposure why do we see high mortality in some species but little in others? One
93 factor that appears important in determining the severity of disease is the tissue tropism of
94 a pathogen. In humans, RNA viruses with neural tropism or generalised systemic tropism
95 tend to result in severe disease [25]. In terms of the patterns of susceptibility across species,
96 virulence may be a consequence of a virus infecting a sensitive tissue or organ resulting in
97 damage by the pathogen directly or by autoimmunity. For example, in bacterial meningitis
98 the pathology is a consequence of bacteria infecting the cerebrospinal fluid and resulting in
99 inflammatory autoimmune damage to the central nervous system [26]. Alternatively, it may

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106 be due to the pathogen getting into a particularly permissive tissue type and proliferating to
 107 high levels. Virus macroevolutionary change is thought to be driven by cross-species
 108 transmission or codivergence rather than by acquiring new niches – or tissues – within a
 109 host [27]. Likewise, the host specificities of viruses are thought to be more labile than tissue
 110 specificities [28]. As such, heterogeneity in the tissues infected may explain variation in
 111 susceptibility across host species.

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 113 Here we use a *Drosophila*-virus system to examine the factors underlying susceptibility
 114 across host species. Across *Drosophila* species many physiological traits show sexual
 115 differentiation [14]. Using a comparative approach, we firstly ask if the patterns of infection
 116 seen across the host phylogeny [3, 5, 9, 29] differ between males and females. We infected
 117 both males and females of a panel of 31 species of Drosophilidae with Drosophila C Virus
 118 (DCV), a positive sense RNA virus in the family Dicistroviridae. Males of *Drosophila*
 119 *melanogaster* have previously been reported to have higher viral loads than females [30]
 120 and show greater rates of shedding, lower clearance and higher transmission potential of
 121 DCV, although these traits can interact with host genotype [31]. Viral load has shown to
 122 have a strong positive correlation with mortality across host species [9, 29]. DCV has been
 123 reported to show tissue tropism in *D. melanogaster*, with high levels of infection in the heart
 124 tissue, fat body, visceral muscle cells around the gut (midgut) and food storage organ (crop)
 125 [32, 33]. To test if the same patterns of tissue infection were observed across species, we
 126 then made comparisons of the tissue tropism of DCV in 7 species of fly.

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128 Methods

130 Viral Infections

131 Thirty one species of Drosophilidae were used to examine sex differences in viral infection.
 132 Stock populations were reared in the laboratory in multi generation populations, in
 133 *Drosophila* stock bottles (Fisherbrand) on 50 ml of their respective food medium (Table S1)
 134 at 22°C and 70% relative humidity with a 12-hour light-dark cycle. Flies were then collected
 135 twice a day in order to try and control for age of maturity in an effort to minimize the
 136 chances that flies would have reached sexual maturity and mated before the sexes were
 137 separated out. Although no effect of mating status on DCV viral load was previously
 138 observed in *D. melanogaster*, this can vary by host genotype and mating status is known to
 139 affect susceptibility to other pathogens [31].

140
 141 To examine differences in viral load between males and females, two vials of 0-1 day old
 142 males flies and two vials of 0-1 day old female flies were collected daily for each species.
 143 Flies were tipped onto fresh vials of food every day to minimise differences in the
 144 microbiomes of flies (Broderick & Lemaitre, 2012; Blum *et al.*, 2013). All vials were kept for
 145 10 days in order to check for larvae, as a sign of successful mating. Only 4 vials from 3
 146 species were found to contain larvae, these were one vial of *D. sturtevantii*, two vials of
 147 *Scaptodrosophila lativittata* and one vial of *Zaprionus tuberculatus*. After 3 days flies were
 148 experimentally infected with DCV. Three replicate blocks were carried out, with each block
 149 being completed over consecutive days. The order of experimental infection was
 150 randomized each day so that both sex and species were randomised. We carried out three

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156 biological replicates for each species for each sex at time zero and 2 days post infection.
157 There was a mean of 17 flies per replicate (range across species = 12-20).

158
159 Viral challenge was carried out by needle inoculation of Drosophila C virus (DCV) strain B6A
160 [34], derived from an isolate collected from *D. melanogaster* in Charolles, France [35]. The
161 virus was prepared as described previously [36]. DCV was grown in Schneider's Drosophila
162 line 2 cells and the Tissue Culture Infective Dose 50 (TCID50) per ml was calculated using the
163 Reed-Muench end-point method. Flies were anesthetized on CO₂ and inoculated using a
164 0.0125 mm diameter stainless steel needle bent to a right angle ~0.25mm from the end
165 (Fine Science Tools, CA, USA). The bent tip of the needle was dipped into the DCV solution
166 (TCID50 = 6.32×10⁹) and pricked into the anepisternal cleft in the thorax of the flies [9, 37].
167 This mode of infection is used as it creates a more reproducible infection that oral
168 inoculation, which is found to cause stochastic infection outcomes in *D. melanogaster* [32].
169 Both methods of infection have been shown to produce systemic infections with the same
170 tissues ultimately becoming infected [32].

171
172 To control for relative viral dose between species a time point zero sample of one vial of flies
173 was immediately snap frozen in liquid nitrogen as soon as they were inoculated. The second
174 vial of flies were inoculated and placed onto a fresh vial of food, and returned to the
175 incubator. Two days after challenge (+/- 1 hour) these flies were snap frozen in liquid
176 nitrogen. This time point is chosen as the sampling time point as previous studies show a
177 clear increase in viral growth but little mortality at this point in infection [5, 29]. Each
178 experimental block contained a day 0 and day 2 replicate for each sex and each species (31
179 species × 2 sexes × 3 experimental blocks).

180 181 **Measuring the change in viral load**

182 Using quantitative Reverse Transcription PCR (qRT-PCR) we measured the change in viral
183 load in male and female flies from day 0 to day 2 post- infection. Total RNA was extracted
184 from the snap frozen flies by homogenizing them in Trizol reagent (Invitrogen) using a bead
185 homogenizer for 2 pulses of 10 seconds (Bead Ruptor 24; Omni international) and stored at
186 -70°C for later extraction. Samples were defrosted and RNA extracted as described
187 previously [29]. Briefly, Trizol homogenized flies were processed in a chloroform isopropanol
188 extraction, eluted in water and reverse- transcribed with Promega GoScript reverse
189 transcriptase (Sigma) and random hexamer primers. Quantification of the change in viral
190 RNA load was calculated in relation to a host endogenous control, the housekeeping gene
191 *Rpl32*. Primers were designed to match the homologous sequence for each of the
192 experimental species that crossed an intron- exon boundary so will only amplify mRNA. qRT-
193 PCR was carried out on 1:10 diluted cDNA using Sensifast Hi-Rox Sybr kit (Bioline). Two qRT-
194 PCR reactions (technical replicates) were carried out per sample with both the viral and
195 endogenous control primers. All melt curves were checked to verify that the correct
196 products were being amplified. All experimental plates had experimental replicates
197 distributed across the plates in a randomized block design to control for between plate
198 differences. Each qRT- PCR plate contained three standard samples. A linear model which
199 included plate ID and biological replicate ID was used to correct the cycle threshold (C_t)
200 values between plates. Any technical replicates that had C_t values more than two cycles

201 apart after the plate correction were repeated. Change in viral load was calculated as the
202 mean C_t value of the pairs of technical replicates. We then used these to calculate the ΔC_t as
203 the difference between the cycle thresholds of the viral DCV qRT-PCR and the Rpl32
204 endogenous control for each sample. The C_t of the day 2 flies relative to day 0 flies was then
205 calculated as, $2^{-\Delta\Delta C_t}$; where $\Delta\Delta C_t = \Delta C_t \text{ day0} - \Delta C_t \text{ day2}$.

206

207 **Body Size**

208 We measured wing size of the flies to control for between species and sex differences in
209 body size. In Drosophilidae wing length has been shown to be a good proxy for body size
210 (Huey *et al.*, 2006). For measurement wings were removed from a mean of 15 male and
211 females flies of each species (range 10–18), stored in 80% ethanol, and later photographed
212 under a dissecting microscope. The length of the IV longitudinal vein from the tip of the
213 proximal segment to where the distal segment joins vein V was recorded Using ImageJ
214 software (version 1.48), and the mean taken for each sex of each species.

215

216 **Inferring the host phylogeny**

217 We used a previously inferred phylogenetic tree [5] using seven genes (mitochondrial; *COI*,
218 *COII*, ribosomal; *28S* and nuclear; *Adh*, *SOD*, *Amyrel*, *Rpl32*). Briefly, we downloaded publicly
219 available sequences from Genbank and where these were not available they were Sanger
220 sequenced from our laboratory stocks. For each gene the sequences were aligned in
221 Geneious (version 9.1.8, www.geneious.com) [38] using the global alignment setting, with
222 free end gaps and 70% similarity IUB cost matrix. The phylogeny was inferred using these
223 genes and the BEAST programme (v1.10.4) [39]. Genes were partitioned into three groups;
224 mitochondria, ribosomal and nuclear, each with separate relaxed uncorrelated lognormal
225 molecular clock models using random starting trees. Each of the partitions used a HKY
226 substitution model with a gamma distribution of rate variation with 4 categories and
227 estimated base frequencies. Additionally, the mitochondrial and nuclear data sets were
228 partitioned into codon positions 1+2 and 3, with unlinked substitution rates and base
229 frequencies across codon positions. The tree-shape prior was set to a birth-death process.
230 We ran the BEAST analysis three times to ensure convergence for 1000 million MCMC
231 generations sampled every 10000 steps. On completion the MCMC process was examined
232 by evaluating the model trace files using the program Tracer (version 1.7.1) (Rambaut *et al.*,
233 2014) to ensure convergence and adequate sampling. The consensus constructed tree was
234 then visualised using FigTree (v1.4.4) (Rambaut, 2006).

235

236 **Tissue Tropism**

237 In order to examine patterns of tissue infection across species we infected 7 species of flies
238 used above; *D. melanogaster*, *D. stuventi*, *S. lativittata*, *D. pseudooscura*, *D. virilis*, *D.*
239 *prosaltans* and *D. littoralis*). Male flies were infected with DCV using the same inoculation
240 method as described above. Two days post infection flies were placed on ice to sedate them,
241 they were then surface sterilized in ice-cold 70% ethanol before being dissected. The head,
242 crop, gut (all parts), malpighian tubules, sex organs (testis and accessory glands) and
243 abdominal cuticle including the attached fat body (hereafter referred to as body) were
244 dissected from each male fly and placed into individual tubes on ice. Six individual flies were
245 pooled per replicate and then snap frozen in liquid nitrogen for later RNA extraction. For

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249 each species there were six replicate pools of each of the six tissue types. At the same time
 250 as the dissections were carried out whole flies were snap frozen for a “whole fly”
 251 comparative viral load measure. All samples were processed as per the methods for viral
 252 load quantification as described above.

253

254 **Statistical analysis**

255 *Sex differences*

256 Viral load in males and females were analysed using phylogenetic mixed models. We fitted
 257 all models using a Bayesian approach in the R package MCMCglmm [40, 41]. We used a
 258 multivariate model with viral load of each sex as the response variable.

259

260 The models took the form of:

$$261 \quad (1) y_{hit} = \beta_{1:t} + wingsize\beta_{2:t} + u_{p:ht} + u_{s:ht} + e_{hit}$$

$$262 \quad (2) y_{hit} = \beta_{1:t} + wingsize\beta_{2:t} + u_{p:ht} + e_{hit}$$

263

264 where y is the change in viral load of the i th biological replicate of host species h , for trait t
 265 (male or female). β are the fixed effects, with β_1 being the intercepts for each trait and β_2
 266 being the effect of wing size. u_p are the random phylogenetic species effects, and e the
 267 model residuals. Models were also run which included the mating status of the species as a
 268 fixed effect. We included this as a binary response for any species that had offspring in at
 269 least one replicate vial (we only found evidence of mating for three species: *D.sturtevanti*,
 270 *S.lativittata* and *Z.tuberculatus*). Model (1) also includes a species-specific component
 271 independent of the phylogeny $u_{s:ht}$ that allow us to estimate the proportion of variation
 272 that is not explained by the host phylogeny v_s (Longdon et al., 2011). However, this was
 273 removed from model (2) as model (1) failed to separate the phylogenetic and **species**-
 274 specific effects. The main model therefore assumes a Brownian motion model of evolution
 275 (Felsenstein, 1973). The random effects and the residuals are assumed to follow a
 276 multivariate normal distribution with a zero mean and a covariance structure $\mathbf{V}_p \otimes \mathbf{A}$ for the
 277 phylogenetic affects and $\mathbf{V}_e \otimes \mathbf{I}$ for the residuals, $\mathbf{V}_s \otimes \mathbf{I}$ for species-specific effects, (\otimes here
 278 represents the Kronecker product). \mathbf{A} is the phylogenetic relatedness matrix, \mathbf{I} is an identity
 279 matrix and the \mathbf{V} are 2x2 (co)variance matrices describing the (co)variances between viral
 280 load of the two sexes. The phylogenetic covariance matrix, \mathbf{V}_p , describes the phylogenetic
 281 inter-specific variances in each trait and the inter-specific covariances between them, \mathbf{V}_s , the
 282 non-phylogenetic between-species variances. The residual covariance matrix, \mathbf{V}_e , describes
 283 the within-species variance that can be both due to real within-species effects and
 284 measurement or experimental errors. The off-diagonal elements of \mathbf{V}_e (the covariances) are
 285 not estimable because each vial only contains one sex and therefore no vial has multiple
 286 measurements, so were set to zero. The MCMC chain was run for 1,300 million iterations
 287 with a burn-in of 30 million iterations and a thinning interval of 1 million. All the models
 288 were run with different prior structures (as in [5]) in order to test results for sensitivity to
 289 the use of priors, but note they all gave similar results.

290

291 The proportion of between **species** variance that can be explained by the phylogeny was
 292 calculated from model (1) using the equation $\frac{V_p}{V_p + V_s}$, where V_p and V_s represent the

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295 phylogenetic and species specific components of between-species variance respectively,
 296 and is equivalent to phylogenetic heritability or Pagel's lambda [42, 43]. The repeatability of
 297 susceptibility measurements was calculated from model (2) as $\frac{V_p}{V_p + V_e}$, where V_e is the
 298 residual variance. Inter-species correlations in viral load between each method were
 299 calculated from model (2) V_p matrix as $\frac{cov_{x,y}}{\sqrt{var_x + var_y}}$ and the slopes (β) of each relationship as
 300 $\frac{cov_{x,y}}{var_x}$. Parameter estimates stated below are means of the posterior density, and 95%
 301 credible intervals reported (CIs) were taken to be the 95% highest posterior density
 302 intervals.

303 *Tissue tropism*

304
 305 Viral load data across species and tissues was analysed using a linear mixed effects model
 306 using the lmer function in the lme4 package in R [41, 44] with models compared using the
 307 anova function and the resulting P values reported. Tissue type, species and their interaction
 308 were included as fixed effects and experimental replicate as a random effect to account for
 309 the individual pool that each set of tissues came from. With only seven species there is little
 310 power to carry out models controlling for phylogeny which is why species was fitted as a
 311 fixed effect.

313 **Data availability**

314
 315 All data and scripts are available at [dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.21437223](https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.21437223).

317 **Results**

319 **Sex differences in viral load**

320 To examine if the sexes respond the same way to viral infection we infected 31 species of
 321 Drosophilidae with DCV and quantified the change in viral load at 2 days post infection using
 322 qRT-PCR. In total we infected 6324 flies across 186 biological replicates (biological replicate
 323 = change in viral load from day 0 to day 2 post-infection), with a mean of 17 flies per
 324 replicate (range across species = 12-20).

325
 326 The mean change in viral load across all species was similar between the sexes (females =
 327 12.59, 95% CI = 1.16, 23.80; males = 12.93, 95% CI = -0.65, 26.25). We found strong positive
 328 interspecific correlation between the viral load of females and males (correlation = 0.92,
 329 95% CI = 0.78, 1.00; Figure 1). The estimate of the slope is close to 1 (β = 0.99, 95% CI = 0.58,
 330 1.38) suggesting males and females respond similarly to infection.

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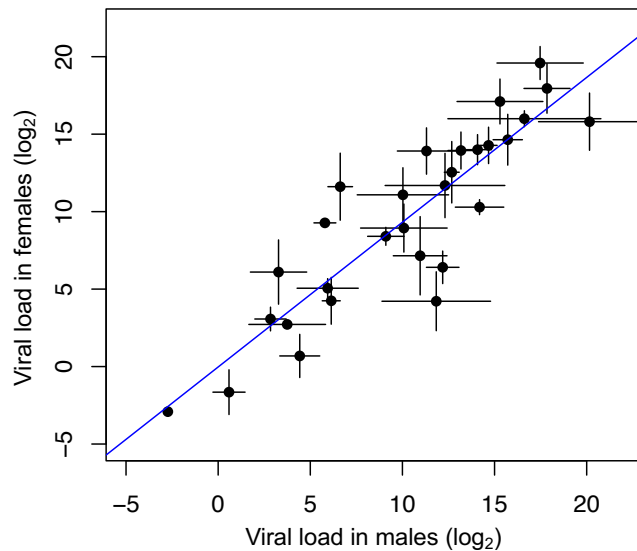
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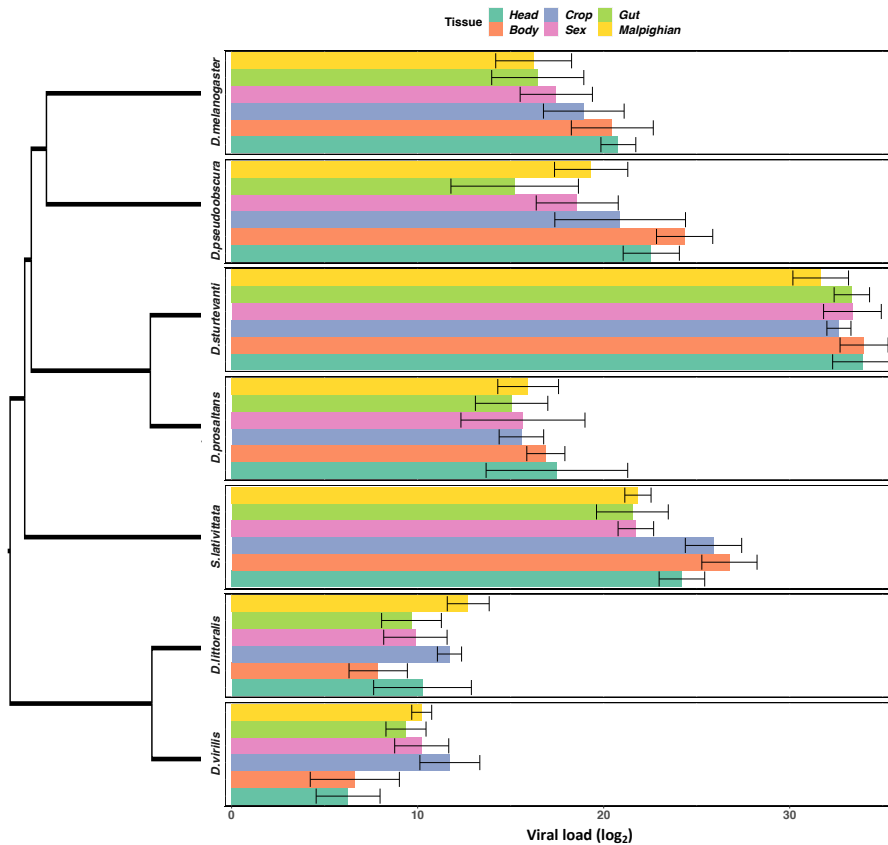
336
 337 **Figure 1. Correlation between viral load in males and females.** Each point represents a
 338 species mean, error bars show standard errors and the trend line is estimated from a linear
 339 model.

340
 341 The full model including the species-specific random effect independent of the host
 342 phylogeny ($u_{s:ht}$) allowed us to calculate the proportion of the variation between the
 343 species that can be explained by the phylogeny ($\frac{V_p}{V_p + V_s}$), equivalent to phylogenetic
 344 heritability or Pagel's lambda [42, 43]. The host phylogeny explains a large proportion of the
 345 inter-specific variation for both males and females (females = 0.68, 95% CIs: 0.06, 0.99;
 346 males = 0.66, 95% CIs: 0.04, 0.99) consistent with previous findings for males [3, 5, 9, 29].
 347 However, we note these estimates have broad confidence intervals, due to the model
 348 struggling to separate out the phylogenetic and non-phylogenetic components. The
 349 repeatability of viral load across species was relatively high for both sexes (females = 0.63,
 350 95% CIs = 0.41, 0.80; males = 0.52, 95% CIs = 0.31, 0.74). We found no effect of either body
 351 size (-0.05, 95% CI's = -0.28, 0.19) or mating status (0.34, 95% CI's = -5.63, 6.27) on viral load.

352 353 **Tissue Tropism**

354 To look at the how the tissue tropism of DCV varied across host species, we infected seven
 355 species of fly with DCV and dissected them into six tissue types. We found large effects of
 356 species on viral load ($\chi^2= 320.65$, d.f=6, $P<0.001$) with >18 million fold difference in viral load
 357 between the least and most susceptible species. Tissues differed in their viral loads to a
 358 lesser extent, with the maximum difference being seen in *D. pseudobscura* with an
 359 approximately 550 fold difference in viral load between the least and most susceptible
 360 tissues ($\chi^2= 15.264$, d.f=4, $P=0.009$). There was no evidence of tissues showing different
 361 patterns of susceptibility in different hosts i.e. no evidence for a tissue-by-species

362 interaction ($\chi^2=41.515$, d.f=30, $P=0.079$).



363
 364 **Figure 2: Tissue tropism data from DCV infected flies.** Male flies were dissected into the six
 365 tissue types 2 days post-infection before undergoing RNA extraction and quantification of
 366 viral load. On the right is the phylogeny of the host species. The bars of the individual panels
 367 are organised following the order of the *D. melanogaster* ranked from the tissue with lowest
 368 to highest viral load. Error bars show standard errors.

369
 370 **Discussion**

371
 372 Here, we examined whether heterogeneities in infection outcomes altered patterns of
 373 susceptibility across host species. We first examined whether males and females responded
 374 in consistent or different ways to infection with DCV. We found that viral susceptibility
 375 between females and males of 31 host species showed a strong positive correlation with a
 376 close to 1:1 relationship, suggesting that susceptibility across species is not sex specific. We
 377 next examined whether heterogeneities in the tissues infected across host species altered
 378 the outcome of infection. We found differences in viral load between tissues of seven host

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381 species, but no evidence of tissues showing different patterns of susceptibility in different
382 host species.

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383
384 A difference between the sexes in immune function and resistance has been found in a
385 range of studies [15, 45]. However, this is not universal, and interactions between the host,
386 pathogen and environmental factors can alter the outcome of infections [46]. Previous
387 meta-analyses have found mixed results. For example, some studies of arthropods have
388 found little evidence for consistent sex differences in parasite prevalence or intensity [47]
389 (although these were largely from natural infections which may have inherently greater
390 sources of variation). Likewise, a phylogenetically controlled meta-analysis of 105 species
391 (including 30 insect species) of immune responses found no evidence for sex biases [48].
392 Other studies have reported a small male bias in parasitism rates for polygynous insects, but
393 a significant female bias for non-polygynous species, with the extent of sex bias parasitism
394 increasing with the degree of sexual size dimorphism [23]. However, other studies of insects
395 (with a smaller number of species) have reported sex differences in some immune traits [15,
396 23] and sex biased prevalence and impacts are well known for sexually transmitted
397 infections in insects [20, 21]. In mammals, males have been shown to often have greater
398 pathogen burdens, with parasitism rates positively correlated to male biased sexual size
399 dimorphism [15-17, 23].

400
401 In *Drosophila melanogaster*, some previous studies have reported males have higher DCV
402 viral loads than females [30]. However, others found no effect of sex on viral load, but did
403 find effects of sex on viral shedding, clearance, and transmission potential, with these traits
404 showing interactions with host genotype [31]. Sexual dimorphism in infection avoidance
405 behaviour has also been reported, when female flies previously exposed to DCV were found
406 to prefer a clean food source indicating a potentially important dimorphism in infection
407 avoidance [49]. Here, we used controlled experimental conditions, but in nature sex
408 differences in behaviour, or how the sexes interact with the environment may lead to
409 differences in pathogen load. A caveat is that the flies used here were of a fixed age and
410 largely virgins – future studies should explore if age and mating status can affect these
411 results.

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412
413 The tissue tropism results here show that susceptibility in a given host is general across
414 tissue types – for example *D. sturtevantii* has a high viral load across all tissues whereas *D.*
415 *virilis* has relatively low viral loads in all tissues (Figure 2). Mortality to DCV infection has
416 previously been shown to show a strong positive correlation with viral load [9, 29]. The data
417 presented here show the susceptibility of a given species is general across all tissue types.
418 This does not exclude the possibility that pathology is due to high viral loads in a given
419 tissue, but does suggest that the mechanism restricting viral load is general across tissues.
420 This may be linked to the ability of the virus to bind to or enter hosts cells, utilise the hosts
421 cellular components for replication or to avoid or suppress the host immune response [50].
422 Further work should explore this further in a range of conditions including flies of both sexes
423 and of varying ages. Comparative studies of human viruses have identified the tissue tropism
424 of viruses to be a significant determinant of virulence; viruses that cause systemic infections
425 (across multiple organs) or that have neural or renal tropisms are most likely to cause severe

428 virulence [25]. It has been suggested that high levels of non-adaptive virulence can be the
429 result of pathogens infecting tissues that do not contribute to onward transmission [26].
430 Other studies have shown differences in host physiology can be important in determining
431 the virulence of a novel pathogen [10]. However, further understanding of how infection
432 results in pathology (i.e. in which tissue the disease tropism occurs [51]) and how virulence
433 is correlated with transmission potential in infections, is needed to explore this further.

434
435 In summary, our results show little evidence for sexual dimorphism in susceptibility to viral
436 infection across species. As such susceptibility in one sex is predictive of that in the other.
437 We find that susceptibility of a species is general across tissue types, suggesting virulence is
438 not due to species specific differences in viral tropism. The patterns of susceptibility
439 observed across species do not appear to be affected by heterogeneities in sex or tissue
440 tropism. Further work is needed to explore how sex differences can vary with factors such as
441 host age, mating status, the environment and pathogen type, and the underlying
442 mechanisms as to why species vary in their susceptibility.

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455 **Conflict of interest disclosure**

456
457
458 The authors declare that they comply have no financial conflicts of interest in relation to the
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635 **Supplementary information**

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637 **Table S1:** Full list of species used in the sex difference experiment and their rearing food for
 638 stock populations. All cornmeal and propionic medium have dried yeast sprinkled onto the
 639 surface of the food, other food types do not unless stated below. The recipes for the food
 640 types are described here <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.21590724.v1>

641

Species	Food
<i>D.affinis</i>	Malt
<i>D.americana</i>	Malt
<i>D.ananassae</i>	Cornmeal
<i>D.arizonae</i>	Banana
<i>D.buzzatii</i>	Malt
<i>D.erecta</i>	Malt + yeast
<i>D.flavomontana</i>	Malt + yeast
<i>D.hydei</i>	Cornmeal
<i>D.immigrans</i>	Malt + yeast
<i>D.lacicola</i>	Malt
<i>D.littoralis</i>	Banana
<i>D.mauritiana</i>	Propionic
<i>D.melanogaster</i>	Cornmeal
<i>D.montana</i>	Malt + yeast
<i>D.novamexicana</i>	Banana
<i>D.obscura</i>	Propionic
<i>D.persimilis</i>	Malt
<i>D.prosaltans</i>	Propionic
<i>D.pseudoobscura</i>	Malt
<i>D.putrida</i>	Propionic

<i>D.santomea</i>	Cornmeal
<i>D.sturtevantii</i>	Cornmeal
<i>D.takahashii</i>	Cornmeal
<i>D.teissieri</i>	Cornmeal
<i>D.virilis</i>	Propionic
<i>H.duncani</i>	Propionic
<i>S.lativittata</i>	Banana
<i>S.lebanonensis</i>	Propionic
<i>Z.inermis</i>	Banana
<i>Z.taronus</i>	Banana
<i>Z.tuberculatus</i>	Banana

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