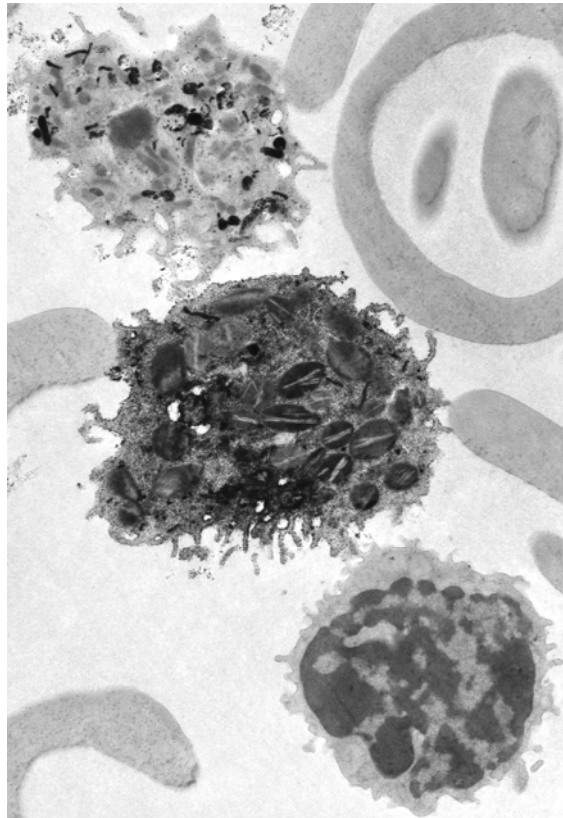


# Structure and Function of Leukocytes in the Family Macropodidae

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University,

2007

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

.....  
Karen Lisa Hulme-Moir

This thesis is dedicated to the two great men of my life.  
My past and my future,  
my inspiration and my undying love.

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and  
leave a trail.

Muriel Strode

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## Abstract

Leukocytes play a central role in protecting the body against infectious organisms and their research is essential for understanding the mechanisms of immunity. By studying leukocytes across a range of species, insights are provided into differing strategies employed to ensure resistance to disease. Surprisingly, the structure and function of marsupial leukocytes has received very limited study. Marsupials represent a major evolutionary pathway with distinct differences in reproduction and development from placental mammals. These differences in the life history of marsupials place unique challenges on the immune system, and differences in leukocyte structure and function could be reasonably expected. In this thesis, studies were undertaken to examine the cytochemical, ultrastructural and functional features of leukocytes from species of marsupials, belonging to the family Macropodidae (kangaroos and wallabies). The aim of these studies was to elucidate the characteristics of macropodid leukocytes and to compare and contrast these features with the known characteristics of other mammalian leukocytes.

Leukocytes from two species of macropodid, the tammar wallaby (*Macropus eugenii*) and the western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosis*), formed the basis of this study with additional material provided from quokka (*Setonix brachyurus*), woylie (*Bettongia pencillata*) and red kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*). Staining characteristics of cells were examined following reaction with Sudan black B, peroxidase, chloroacetate esterase, naphthyl butyrate esterase, alkaline phosphatase and periodic acid-Schiff. Peroxidase and Sudan Black B reactions were similar to domestic animal species but chloroacetate esterase and naphthyl butyrate esterase were unreliable as markers for macropodid neutrophils and monocytes, respectively. Significant variation in staining for alkaline phosphatase was seen between species of macropodid. Tammar wallabies and quokka demonstrated strong neutrophil alkaline phosphatase activity whereas western grey kangaroos, red kangaroos and woylies contained no activity within their leukocytes.

Peroxidase and alkaline phosphatase cytochemistry were also assessed at the ultrastructural level with transmission electron microscopy. This allowed the identification of distinct granule populations within macropodid neutrophils. Two subcellular compartments

containing alkaline phosphatase activity were identified within tammar wallaby neutrophils. These were considered equivalent to secretory vesicles and a subpopulation of specific granules. Tubular vesicles containing alkaline phosphatase were also identified within the eosinophils of tammar wallabies. These structures were a novel finding having not been reported previously in the eosinophils of other animal species.

In addition to cytochemistry, the general ultrastructure of leukocytes from tammar wallabies and western grey kangaroos were reported. Results were similar to previous reports for other marsupial species. The current body of knowledge was extended by the first detailed description of the ultrastructure of basophils in a marsupial.

To assess functional aspects of macropodid neutrophils, flow cytometric assays were performed examining oxidative burst responses and phagocytosis. Reactive oxygen species were generated by neutrophils from tammar wallabies and western grey kangaroos in response to phorbol 12-myristate 13-acetate but not N-formyl-Met-Leu-Phe or opsonised bacteria. Phagocytosis of opsonised bacteria was also measured in neutrophils from tammar wallabies, which was poor in contrast to ovine neutrophils. However, flow cytometric studies were limited by sample preparation. Further optimisation of isolation methods for tammar wallaby leukocytes should be undertaken before dogmatic conclusions are drawn.

Overall, the results of this thesis demonstrate that, in the areas examined, the general characteristics of leukocyte structure and function of mammals are present in macropodids. However differences were identified both within and outside of the macropodid group. These differences have important ramifications for the use of 'model' species in the study of leukocyte biology in marsupials. The results also provide potentially useful tools for the clinical diagnosis of haematological disease in macropodids and may be of interest to those studying comparative and evolutionary aspects of leukocyte structure and function.

# Table of Contents

Thesis Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	viii
List of Figures and Tables	xi
List of Units	xvii
Abbreviations	xviii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Aims of this thesis	2
Reproduction and development in Macropodidae	4
Development of lymphoid tissue	4
Immaturity of haematopoietic system at birth	5
Immunological protection of pouch young – maternal factors	7
Mechanisms of innate immunity in pouch young	8
Immune responses in adult macropodids	9
Study of structure and function in marsupial leukocytes	10
Outline of thesis	11
Chapter 2. Cell Separation	14
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Methods	18
2.2.1 Blood Collection	18
2.2.2 Isolation of leukocytes	21
2.2.3 Assessment of leukocyte isolation	23
2.3 Results	25
2.4 Discussion	30



Chapter 3. Cytochemistry	33
3.1 Introduction	34
3.1.1 Sudan black B	38
3.1.2 Peroxidase	38
3.1.3 Esterases	39
3.1.4 Alkaline phosphatase	43
3.1.5 Periodic acid-Schiff	45
3.2 Methods	47
3.2.1 Preparation of blood films	47
3.2.2 Cytochemical staining	47
3.2.3 Evaluation	47
3.2.4 Stability of blood films for cytochemistry	48
3.3 Results	50
3.3.1 Cytochemistry	50
3.3.2 Cytochemical stability	75
3.4 Discussion	79
Chapter 4. Electron Microscopy	84
4.1 Introduction	85
4.1.1 Peroxidase	90
4.1.2 Alkaline phosphatase	92
4.2 Methods	96
4.2.1 General preparation of samples for morphological studies	96
4.2.2 Preparation of leukocytes suspensions for cytochemistry	96
4.2.3 Peroxidase cytochemistry	97
4.2.4 Alkaline phosphatase cytochemistry	98
4.2.5 Remodelling of ALP compartments in activated granulocytes	99
4.3 Results	101
4.3.1 Western grey kangaroo	101
4.3.2 Tammar wallaby	112
4.3.3 Peroxidase cytochemistry	122

4.3.4 Alkaline phosphatase cytochemistry _____	131
4.3.5 Remodelling of ALP compartments in activated granulocytes _____	140
4.4 Discussion _____	162
<b>Chapter 5. Flow Cytometry _____</b>	<b>171</b>
5.1 Introduction _____	172
5.2 Methods _____	181
5.2.1 Cell sorting _____	181
5.2.2 Oxidative burst assay _____	183
5.2.3 Phagocytosis assay _____	187
5.3 Results _____	189
5.3.1 Cell sorting _____	189
5.3.2 Oxidative burst assay _____	190
5.3.3 Phagocytosis assays _____	202
5.4 Discussion _____	208
<b>Chapter 6. General Discussion _____</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 2.1 _____	221
Appendix 3.1 _____	222
Appendix 3.2 _____	224
Appendix 3.3 _____	226
Appendix 4.1 _____	233
Appendix 5.1 _____	237
<b>References _____</b>	<b>241</b>

# List of Figures and Tables

## Chapter 1

Figure 1.1 Evolutionary tree of the family Macropodidae	3
---	---

## Chapter 2

Figure 2.1 Female tammar wallaby, <i>Macropus eugenii</i> , with pouch young	18
--	----

Figure 2.2 An adult male western grey kangaroo, <i>Macropus fuliginosis</i> , in Nambung National Park, 245km north of Perth.	19
--	----

Figure 2.3 Venepuncture of the lateral caudal vein illustrating collection of blood from a macropodoid	20
--	----

Figure 2.4 Medial thigh of western grey kangaroo demonstrating location of femoral artery and vein	20
--	----

Figure 2.5 Isolation technique for western grey kangaroo leukocytes	22
---	----

Figure 2.6 Isolation technique for separating leukocytes from tammar wallaby blood	23
--	----

Figure 2.7 Results of leukocyte isolation from the blood of an adult female western grey kangaroo	26
---	----

Figure 2.8 Results from a typical leukocyte isolation from the blood of an adult tammar wallaby	28
---	----

Table 2.1 Techniques commonly used in the isolation of leukocytes from blood samples	15
--	----

Table 2.2 Density gradient separation of granulocyte and mononuclear cell populations from macropodid blood	27
--	----

## Chapter 3

Figure 3.1 Chloroacetate esterase (CAE) reaction	41
--	----

Figure 3.2 Naphthyl butyrate esterase (NBE) reaction	42
--	----

Figure 3.3 Alkaline phosphatase (ALP) reaction	44
--	----

Figure 3.4 PAS reaction	45
-------------------------	----

Figure 3.5 Characteristic stain reaction of equine leukocytes on control films for alkaline phosphatase	51
---	----

Figure 3.6 Characteristic stain reaction of canine leukocytes to naphthyl butyrate esterase (NBE)	52
---	----

Figure 3.7 Characteristic staining of canine leukocytes to chloroacetate esterase (CAE)	53
---	----

Figure 3.8 Characteristic stain reaction of canine leukocytes to Sudan black B (SBB)	54
--	----

Figure 3.9 Characteristic stain reaction of canine leukocytes for peroxidase (PER)	55
--	----

Figure 3.10 Cytochemical characteristics of neutrophils from the tammar wallaby ( <i>Macropus eugenii</i> )	56
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Figure 3.11 Cytochemical characteristics of lymphocytes from the tammar wallaby ( <i>Macropus eugenii</i> )	57
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Figure 3.12 Cytochemical characteristics of monocytes from the tammar wallaby ( <i>Macropus eugenii</i> )	58
Figure 3.13 Cytochemical characteristics of eosinophils from the tammar wallaby ( <i>Macropus eugenii</i> )	59
Figure 3.14 Cytochemical characteristics of neutrophils from the western grey kangaroo ( <i>Macropus fuliginosis</i> )	60
Figure 3.15 Cytochemical characteristics of lymphocytes from the western grey kangaroo ( <i>Macropus fuliginosis</i> )	61
Figure 3.16 Cytochemical characteristics of monocytes from the western grey kangaroo ( <i>Macropus fuliginosis</i> )	62
Figure 3.17 Cytochemical characteristics of eosinophils from the western grey kangaroo ( <i>Macropus fuliginosis</i> )	63
Figure 3.18 Cytochemical characteristics of neutrophils from the woylie ( <i>Bettongia pencillata</i> )	64
Figure 3.19 Cytochemical characteristics of lymphocytes from the woylie ( <i>Bettongia pencillata</i> )	65
Figure 3.20 Cytochemical characteristics of monocytes from the woylie ( <i>Bettongia pencillata</i> )	66
Figure 3.21 Cytochemical characteristics of eosinophils from the woylie ( <i>Bettongia pencillata</i> )	67
Figure 3.22 Cytochemical characteristics of neutrophils from the quokka ( <i>Setonix brachyurus</i> )	68
Figure 3.23 Cytochemical characteristics of lymphocytes from the quokka ( <i>Setonix brachyurus</i> )	69
Figure 3.24 Cytochemical characteristics of monocytes from the quokka ( <i>Setonix brachyurus</i> )	70
Figure 3.25 Cytochemical characteristics of eosinophils from the quokka ( <i>Setonix brachyurus</i> )	71
Figure 3.26 Intense positive staining for CAE in a tammar wallaby neutrophil	50
Figure 3.27 Cytochemical reaction of basophils from different macropodid species	75
Figure 3.28 Effect of storage temperature on peroxidase activity of neutrophils in blood films from tammar wallabies	76
Figure 3.29 Peroxidase activity in stored blood films from tammar wallabies	76
Figure 3.30 Effect of storage temperature on staining activity of tammar wallaby lymphocytes for CAE	77
Figure 3.31 Staining reaction of tammar wallaby leukocytes to CAE after 4wks storage of blood films at room temperature	78
Table 3.1 Summary of the cytochemical properties of normal leukocytes from various animal species	35
Table 3.2 Leukocyte alkaline phosphatase (LAP) scores associated with different disease conditions in humans	44

Table 3.3 Summary of cytochemical staining methods	48
Table 3.4 Cytochemical staining features of leukocytes from 4 species of macropodids	72
Table 3.5 Variation of alkaline phosphatase content in leukocytes of macropodid species	74
Table 3.6 Division of the genus <i>Macropus</i> into 3 major subgenera based on biochemical and morphological data	82

## Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 A neutrophil from a western grey kangaroo	102
Figure 4.2 Granules within the cytoplasm of a western grey kangaroo neutrophil	102
Figure 4.3 Eosinophil from a western grey kangaroo	104
Figure 4.4 Basophil from a western grey kangaroo	105
Figure 4.5 Cytoplasmic detail of basophils from the western grey kangaroo	105
Figure 4.6 Variation of vesicle structure in basophils from the western grey kangaroo	106
Figure 4.7 Small lymphocyte from western grey kangaroo	108
Figure 4.8 Membranous structures within a western grey kangaroo lymphocyte	109
Figure 4.9 Medium to large lymphocyte from western grey kangaroo	109
Figure 4.10 Activated lymphocyte from western grey kangaroo	110
Figure 4.11 Another activated lymphocyte from western grey kangaroo	111
Figure 4.12 Monocyte from western grey kangaroo	113
Figure 4.13 Cytoplasm of a western grey kangaroo monocyte	113
Figure 4.14 Neutrophil from a tammar wallaby	114
Figure 4.15 Granules within the cytoplasm of a tammar wallaby neutrophil	114
Figure 4.16 Eosinophil from tammar wallaby	115
Figure 4.17 Small lymphocyte from tammar wallaby	117
Figure 4.18 Membranous structures within tammar wallaby lymphocytes	118
Figure 4.19 Multi-vesicular body in tammar wallaby lymphocyte	119
Figure 4.20 Lysosomal structure in the cytoplasm of a tammar wallaby lymphocyte	119
Figure 4.21 Activated lymphocyte from tammar wallaby	120
Figure 4.22 Monocyte from tammar wallaby	121
Figure 4.23 Peroxidase activity in a representative neutrophil from western grey kangaroo	123

Figure 4.24 Peroxidase cytochemistry of a representative neutrophil from a tammar wallaby	124
Figure 4.25 Peroxidase-positive granules in the cytoplasm of a neutrophil from a western grey kangaroo	125
Figure 4.26 Cytoplasm of a neutrophil from a western grey kangaroo reacted for peroxidase	125
Figure 4.27 Peroxidase activity in the specific granules of eosinophils from western grey kangaroos	126
Figure 4.28 Peroxidase activity in eosinophils from tammar wallabies	127
Figure 4.29 Peroxidase activity in basophils from western grey kangaroos	128
Figure 4.30 Peroxidase activity within a monocyte from a western grey kangaroo	130
Figure 4.31 Neutrophil from a western grey kangaroo reacted for alkaline phosphatase	132
Figure 4.32 Alkaline phosphatase activity in tammar wallaby neutrophils	133
Figure 4.33 Thin section of a tammar wallaby neutrophil reacted for alkaline phosphatase	134
Figure 4.34 Thick section of a tammar wallaby neutrophil reacted for alkaline phosphatase	135
Figure 4.35-38 Alkaline phosphatase activity in the neutrophils of tammar wallabies	136
Figure 4.39 Alkaline phosphatase activity in the cytoplasm of an eosinophil from a tammar wallaby	141
Figure 4.40 More alkaline phosphatase-containing structures in the cytoplasm of a tammar wallaby eosinophil	141
Figure 4.41 Alkaline phosphatase activity in an eosinophil from a tammar wallaby	142
Figure 4.42 Summary of alkaline phosphatase activity in tammar wallaby leukocytes	143
Figure 4.43 Monocyte from a tammar wallaby reacted for alkaline phosphatase	144
Figure 4.44 Basophil from a tammar wallaby reacted for alkaline phosphatase	144
Figure 4.45 Control incubations for alkaline phosphatase cytochemistry	145
Figure 4.46 A tammar wallaby eosinophil in a negative control preparation for alkaline phosphatase	146
Figure 4.47 Thin section of a neutrophil from a tammar wallaby stimulated <i>in vitro</i> with PMA for 1min	147
Figure 4.48-49 More thin sections of neutrophils stimulated <i>in vitro</i> with PMA for 1min	148
Figure 4.50 Thick section of a tammar wallaby neutrophil stimulated for 1min <i>in vitro</i> with PMA	149
Figure 4.51 Alkaline phosphatase activity in neutrophils stimulated <i>in vitro</i> with PMA for 10min	150
Figure 4.52 Tammar wallaby neutrophil following stimulation with PMA for 10min	151
Figure 4.53 Area of cytoplasm from a neutrophil stimulated <i>in vitro</i> for 10min with PMA	151
Figure 4.54 Thick sections through tammar wallaby neutrophils stimulated for 10min with PMA	152
Figure 4.55 Thin section through a tammar wallaby neutrophil stimulated with fMLP for 5min	154

Figure 4.56 Thin section of a tammar wallaby neutrophil stimulated for 5min with fMLP and stained with uranyl acetate and lead citrate	155
Figure 4.57 Maximum projection distances of ALP-containing vesicles in neutrophils from the tammar wallaby	153
Figure 4.58 Thick section of a tammar wallaby neutrophil stimulated with fMLP for 5min	157
Figure 4.59 Eosinophil from a sample stimulated for 1min with PMA	158
Figure 4.60 Thick section of a tammar wallaby eosinophil after stimulation with PMA for 10min	159
Figure 4.61 Thick section of a tammar wallaby eosinophil after stimulation with fMLP for 5min	160
Figure 4.62 Another thick section of a tammar wallaby eosinophil stimulated with fMLP	161
Table 4.1 The granule populations of neutrophils and heterophils from select species of vertebrates	88
Table 4.2 Enzyme content of the granule populations within macropodid neutrophils	129
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
Figure 5.1 Dot plot of a leukocyte suspension from a tammar wallaby demonstrating the gates used during sorting	182
Figure 5.2 Cell sorting of leukocyte suspensions from tammar wallabies on a FACSVantage cell sorter	189
Figure 5.3 Dot plots of leukocyte suspensions from tammar wallabies, sheep and western grey kangaroos generated by a FACSCalibur flow cytometer	191
Figure 5.4 Oxidative burst response of cells from the granulocyte gate of a representative tammar wallaby sample	193
Figure 5.5 Summary of the changes in FL1 fluorescence to different concentrations of PMA in cell populations of tammar wallabies	196
Figure 5.6 Alteration of cell size in a leukocyte suspension from a tammar wallaby following exposure to PMA	196
Figure 5.7 Oxidative burst response of granulocytes from a western grey kangaroo	197
Figure 5.8 Gating of granulocyte populations in tammar wallaby samples stimulated with opsonised zymosan	199
Figure 5.9 Quenching of FL1 fluorescence in leukocytes of tammar wallabies following incubation with opsonised <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	199
Figure 5.10 Oxidative response of tammar wallaby granulocytes to various stimuli	199

Figure 5.11 Confirmation of labelling in <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	201
Figure 5.12 Overlay histograms of phagocytic activity in granulocytes from tammar wallabies	201
Figure 5.13 Interaction of <i>E. coli</i> with tammar wallaby granulocytes after 30min incubation	201
Figure 5.14 Phagocytosis of <i>E. coli</i> by granulocytes from a tammar wallaby	203
Figure 5.15 A neutrophil from a tammar wallaby sample sorted from the fluorescent region of the granulocyte gate	204
Figure 5.16 Lack of phagocytic activity in lymphocytes from a tammar wallaby following incubation with <i>E. coli</i>	205
Figure 5.17 Phagocytosis of <i>S. aureus</i> by ovine granulocytes	206
Figure 5.18 Phagocytosis of <i>E. coli</i> by ovine granulocytes	207
Table 5.1 Summary of literature on oxidative responses of neutrophils from a range of animal species	174
Table 5.2 Cell types found within gated populations during flow cytometric analysis of leukocyte suspensions from tammar wallabies	190
Table 5.3 Effect of increasing concentrations of PMA on oxidant production by cells in the granulocyte gate of samples from tammar wallabies and western grey kangaroos	195
Table 5.4 Oxidative responses of cells in the granulocyte gate of tammar wallaby samples to various stimuli	200



## List of Units

°C	degrees celsius
"	inch
dpi	dots per inch
g	gauge
x <i>g</i>	times gravity
Ha	hectare
kV	kilovolts
mOsm	milliosmole
nm	nanometre
µm	micrometre
mm <sup>3</sup>	millimetre cubed
ng	nanogram
µg	microgram
mg	milligram
kg	kilogram
µL	microlitre
mL	millilitre
L	litre
µM	micromolar
mM	millimolar
M	molar
s	second
min	minute
hr	hour
wk	week
mth	month
yr	year
w/v	weight per volume

## Abbreviations

ALP	alkaline phosphatase
AML	acute myeloid leukaemia
BSA	bovine serum albumin
CAE	chloroacetate esterase
CD	cluster of differentiation
CMCA	Centre for Microscopy, Characterisation and Analysis; The University of Western Australia
CML	chronic myelogenous leukaemia
CYTO B	cytochalasin B
DAB	diaminobenzidine
DCF	dichlorofluorescein
DCFH	dichlorofluorescein
DCFH-DA	dichlorofluorescein diacetate
DHR	dihydrorhodamine 123
DMSO	dimethyl sulfoxide
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
DPBS	Dulbecco's phosphate buffered saline
EM	electron microscopy
EDTA	ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
EPO	eosinophil peroxidase
FITC	fluorescein isocyanate
fMLP	N-formyl-Met-Leu-Phe
FSC	forward light scatter
GPI	glycosyl-phosphatidyl inositol
HBSS	Hank's balanced salt solution
HE	hydroethidine
HLA	human leukocyte antigen
HPO	horseradish peroxidase

ICE	samples incubated with opsonised bacteria on ice
Ig	immunoglobulin
LAMPs	lysosome-associated membrane proteins
LAP	leukocyte alkaline phosphatase
MFI	mean fluorescence intensity
MHC	major histocompatibility complex
MPO	myeloperoxidase
MVBs	multi-vesicular bodies
NADPH	nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
NBE	naphthyl butyrate esterase
NSEs	non-specific esterases
PAS	periodic acid-Schiff
PBS	phosphate buffered saline
PBSgel	phosphate buffered saline containing 0.02M EDTA, 0.05M dextrose and 1% gelatin
PER	peroxidase
PI	propidium iodide
PMA	phorbol 12-myristate 13-acetate
PRPs	primary reaction products
RBC	erythrocyte concentration
RER	rough endoplasmic reticulum
SBB	Sudan black B
SD	standard deviation
SSC	side light scatter
UNOPS	samples incubated with unopsonised bacteria