

## Biological Functions of *Artemisia argyi* and Its Applications in Livestock Production: Postprint

**Authors:** Liu Chaoqi, Chang Juan, Wang Ping, Yin Qingqiang, Dang Xiaowei, Gao Tianzeng

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### Abstract

*Artemisia* is a class of perennial plants in the family Asteraceae and genus *Artemisia*. The nutritionally active substances in *Artemisia* leaves include volatile oils, flavonoids, triterpenoids, and eudesmanes, which exhibit biological functions such as antibacterial, antiviral, antioxidant, anticancer, and immune-enhancing effects. *Artemisia* extract and its processed products, including *Artemisia* powder and *Artemisia* stalks, have been reported as functional feed additives or feed ingredients in livestock production, showing broad application prospects. This review summarizes the main nutritionally active substances of *Artemisia* and their omics functions, as well as the current status of *Artemisia* application in livestock production, aiming to provide a theoretical basis for the rational utilization of *Artemisia* in livestock production.

### Full Text

#### *Artemisia argyi*: Biological Functions and Applications in Animal Production

\*\*LIU Chaoqi<sup>1</sup>, CHANG Juan<sup>1</sup>, WANG Ping<sup>1</sup>, YIN Qingqiang<sup>1\*</sup>, DANG Xiaowei<sup>2</sup>, GAO Tianzeng<sup>3\*\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine, Henan Agricultural University, Zhengzhou 450002, China

<sup>2</sup>Henan Delin Biological Product Co. Ltd., Xinxiang 453000, China

<sup>3</sup>Henan Guang'an Biotechnological Co. Ltd., Zhengzhou 450001, China

**Abstract:** *Artemisia argyi* is a perennial plant belonging to the genus *Artemisia* in the Compositae family. The leaves of *A. argyi* contain various bioactive nutrients, including volatile oils, flavonoids, triterpenoids, and eudesmane compounds, which exhibit biological functions such as antibacterial, antiviral, antioxidant, anticancer, and immunity-enhancing activities. *A. argyi* extracts and

processed products such as mugwort powder and stalks have been reported as functional feed additives or ingredients in animal production, demonstrating broad application prospects. This review synthesizes current research on the main bioactive nutrients of *A. argyi*, their omics functions, and the status of its application in animal husbandry, aiming to provide a theoretical basis for the rational utilization of *A. argyi* in animal production.

**Keywords:** *Artemisia argyi* leaf; bioactive nutrient component; omics function; animal production

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*Artemisia argyi*, commonly known as mugwort, is a perennial semi-shrub herbaceous plant in the Compositae family that exhibits strong adaptability. It grows naturally along roadsides, in forest lands, on barren slopes, and in hilly areas, and can be cultivated artificially across most regions of China. As a wild medicinal herb, *A. argyi* has been documented in both the *Compendium of Materia Medica* and *Miscellaneous Records of Famous Physicians* for its dried leaves' pharmacological effects in dispelling cold and dampness, warming meridians, activating collaterals, and providing anti-inflammatory, hemostatic, and cough-relieving benefits [1-2]. Beyond its medicinal value, *A. argyi* emits a distinctive aroma and serves as a nutrient-rich food ingredient for health products and food formulations, such as mugwort-purple sweet potato chiffon cake and mugwort-pumpkin health cake [3-4]. Currently, large-scale cultivation in Qichun County, Hubei Province and Nanyang City, Henan Province has established industrial clusters producing diverse products with an annual output value reaching hundreds of billions of yuan, creating employment opportunities for local farmers, increasing their income, and driving regional economic development [5].

In recent years, growing concerns over the side effects of long-term antibiotic use and increasing environmental awareness have intensified the search for antibiotic alternatives. As a herbaceous plant with nutritional value, *A. argyi* leaves are commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine and offer health benefits. Being a natural plant source, it leaves no residues and does not induce drug resistance, gradually gaining recognition as a valuable resource. However, reports on the application of *A. argyi* as a feed additive in animal production remain limited, primarily due to its complex composition and unclear mechanisms of action in animals. Traditional nutritional approaches analyzing single bioactive components cannot adequately evaluate its nutritional value, as interactions among various components can generate new properties and functions not present in individual compounds, resulting in unique collective attributes. Therefore, this review employs the theory of bioactive nutrient omics to analyze domestic and international research on *A. argyi*, summarizing its bioactive nutrients, omics functions, and application effects in animal production to provide theoretical references for developing and utilizing *A. argyi*-based bioactive nutrient omics products.

### 1.1 Bioactive Nutrients in *Artemisia argyi*

The leaves of *A. argyi* contain proteins, fats, polysaccharides, fiber, and mineral elements. The fat component includes various fatty acids, with polyunsaturated fatty acids being the most abundant at 60.42% [6]. These fatty acids serve as major constituents of cell membranes and demonstrate therapeutic effects against cancer and cardiovascular diseases while participating in growth, development, and gene regulation [7]. Polysaccharides extracted from *A. argyi* leaves can enhance animal immunity, reduce blood glucose, and inhibit bacterial and viral growth [8]. Research has shown that *A. argyi* leaves contain 13.1% crude protein and 5.69% crude fat (including various fatty acids), along with 16 amino acids and 14 mineral elements [9].

Beyond these conventional nutrients, *A. argyi* possesses compounds that exert nutritional regulation and health-promoting functions. Chemical analysis has identified the main bioactive nutrients as volatile oils, flavonoids, eudesmane compounds, and triterpenoids [2,10].

Volatile oils can be extracted from *A. argyi* leaves through various methods including organic solvent extraction, microwave-assisted extraction, ultrasonic extraction, pressurized extraction, and supercritical fluid extraction. These oils are complex mixtures containing hydrocarbons, alcohols, aldehydes, ketones, esters, monoterpenes, and sesquiterpenes [11-13]. The composition and content of volatile oils vary depending on geographical origin, harvest time, and extraction method. With technological advances, the number of identified compounds has increased from 20-30 to over 100. The most readily isolated and abundant compounds include 1,8-cineole, camphor, borneol, caryophyllene, caryophyllene oxide, -thujone, -thujone, and 4-terpineol [14-16].

Flavonoids typically refer to a series of compounds composed of two phenolic hydroxyl benzene rings connected through a central three-carbon bridge. Common extraction methods from *A. argyi* leaves include maceration, ultrafiltration, enzymatic hydrolysis, adsorption, microwave, ultrasonic, and supercritical fluid extraction, followed by chromatography, salting-out, and extraction for further purification [17]. Shen Xiangzhong [18] used ethanol and ether to extract crude flavonoids from *A. argyi* leaves and optimized purification conditions with AB-8 macroporous adsorption resin, achieving a 3.1-fold increase in crude flavonoid yield. Wei Xingxing et al. [19] optimized Soxhlet extraction conditions through orthogonal experiments, obtaining a total flavonoid yield of 3.85% under specific solid-liquid ratios, temperatures, and time conditions. *A. argyi* leaves contain numerous flavonoid compounds, including flavones, flavonols, anthocyanins, quercetin, dihydroflavones, dihydroflavonols, chalcones, flavan-3,4-diols, xanthenes, and biflavonoids [10].

Triterpenoids are terpenoid compounds composed of 27-30 carbon atoms formed by several isoprene units after hydroxyl removal and head-to-tail connection, widely distributed in plants. They are typically extracted from *A. argyi* leaves using organic solvents such as chloroform or ether. Common triterpenoids

include , -amyrin, stigmasterol, , -amyrin acetate, -sitosterol, lupenone, ferrenone, and 3 -methoxy-9 ,19-cyclolanost-23(E)-en-25,26-diol [20]. Research on eudesmane compounds remains limited, with few isolated substances including cryptomeridiol, 1-oxo-4 -acetoxyeudesma-2,11(13)-dien-12,8 -olide, yomogin, and 1-oxo-4 -acetoxyeudesma-2,11(13)-dien-12,8 -olide [21].

### 1.2.1 Antibacterial and Antiviral Functions

The natural environment harbors numerous microorganisms, including bacteria, fungi, and viruses, some of which are detrimental to animal health, such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Escherichia coli* that cause diarrhea. Controlling the proliferation of these pathogenic microorganisms in the intestinal tract represents an urgent research priority. Huang Xuequan et al. [22] found that liquid from boiled *A. argyi* demonstrated superior in vitro antibacterial activity against *E. coli* compared to seven other Chinese medicinal herbs. Ahameethunisa et al. [23] similarly observed that *A. argyi* extracts inhibited *E. coli* but showed no effect against *S. aureus* and *Enterococcus faecalis*. Other studies have demonstrated that active components extracted from *A. argyi* leaves using ultrasonic methods exhibit significant antibacterial effects against common pathogens including *S. aureus*, white staphylococcus, and *E. coli* [24-25]. Wei Bin et al. [26] found that decoction liquid from *A. argyi* leaves could inhibit *E. coli* activity and reduce its resistance to gentamicin. Nuerbiye Aobulikasimu et al. [27] obtained volatile oils and monomeric compounds (eucalyptol and 4-terpinenol) through steam distillation and silica gel column chromatography, which inhibited *Phytophthora*, *Aspergillus niger*, *Trichothecium roseum*, *Penicillium*, and *Alternaria*, suggesting potential as food anti-spoilage agents. Beyond antibacterial and antifungal effects, *A. argyi* extracts also demonstrate antiviral properties. Studies have shown that volatile oils and ethyl acetate extracts from *A. argyi* can effectively inhibit hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection of HepG2.2.15 cells in vitro, offering therapeutic potential for hepatitis B [28-29].

### 1.2.2 Antioxidant Function

Under normal physiological conditions, mitochondria produce hydrogen peroxide, superoxide anions, and hydroxyl radicals during cellular aerobic metabolism. Typically, the endogenous antioxidant system eliminates these substances to maintain homeostasis. However, environmental changes such as dietary shifts, temperature fluctuations, and humidity variations can cause excessive accumulation of these reactive species beyond the body's elimination capacity, leading to oxidative stress that reduces animal performance, causes disease, and may result in death. Research has demonstrated that polysaccharides extracted from *A. argyi* leaves using hot water maceration and purification can effectively scavenge hydroxyl radicals in vitro, with scavenging capacity increasing proportionally with polysaccharide concentration [30-31]. Han et al. [32] obtained total phenols and flavonoids through sequential ethyl acetate fractionation and purification of *A. argyi* leaves, which showed high superoxide anion radical scavenging ac-

tivity. Melguizo-Melguizo et al. [33] extracted chlorogenic acid derivatives and conjugated luteolin, quercetin, and kaempferol using maceration and ultrasonic-assisted extraction, confirming their strong antioxidant properties through experimental validation.

### 1.2.3 Anticancer Function

When animal bodies are exposed to external carcinogenic factors, metabolic processes generate free radicals that accumulate around cell membranes, causing lipid peroxidation and attacking intracellular DNA, resulting in DNA damage and carcinogenesis. Additionally, peroxides produced by lipid peroxidation can induce mutations and cancer. Shoemaker et al. [34] added crude distillates from *A. argyi* leaves to various cancer cell lines, observing growth inhibition in all cases and suggesting potential as an antitumor agent. Flavonoids can inhibit the activity of certain cytochrome P450 enzymes or inactivate them, preventing the activation of chemical carcinogens into active intermediates and facilitating carcinogen detoxification. Furthermore, quercetin has been shown to inhibit tumor cell growth and differentiation, achieving anticancer effects [35]. Kim et al. [36] extracted relatively pure phenolic and flavonoid compounds from five Korean *A. argyi* varieties, demonstrating effective cancer cell inhibition in vitro. Seo et al. [37] isolated two flavonoid compounds (5,6-dihydroxy-7,3,4-trimethoxyflavone and 5,6,4-trihydroxy-7,3-dimethoxyflavone) from *A. argyi* leaves using methanol extraction and purification, which inhibited mouse colon cancer by 44.6% and 14.6%, respectively, without causing weight loss. These findings indicate that *Artemisia* plants represent an ideal source of functional food ingredients with anticancer properties.

### 1.2.4 Anti-inflammatory and Immunity-Enhancing Functions

When animal bodies encounter external disturbances, tissues and organs initiate defensive responses to mitigate damage, manifesting inflammatory symptoms such as redness, heat, and swelling. Shin et al. [38] found that *A. argyi* leaves and dehydromatricarin extracted from them could effectively reduce lipopolysaccharide-induced airway inflammation by decreasing inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS) gene expression and NF- $\kappa$ B phosphorylation. Tian Lu [39] extracted chemical components from *A. argyi* leaves and demonstrated anti-inflammatory effects using both in vitro macrophage inflammation models and in vivo zebrafish wound infection models. Nam et al. [40] showed that jaceosidin extracted from *A. argyi* leaves could inhibit microglial inflammatory responses. Yin Meizhen et al. [41] extracted crude polysaccharides from *A. argyi* leaves using ethanol and purified water, which enhanced macrophage phagocytosis of ink particles and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Further research revealed that adding crude *A. argyi* polysaccharides to cultured mouse spleen cells significantly increased the activity of tumor necrosis factor and interleukin-2 (IL-2) secretion [42]. Yu Guipeng et al. [43] similarly demonstrated that *A. argyi* polysaccharides could enhance the immunomodulatory function of macrophages. Long

Xueming [44] prepared volatile oil emulsions from *A. argyi* leaf extracts and administered them to mice via gavage for seven consecutive days, with results indicating enhanced immunity.

### 1.2.5 Other Omics Functions

Beyond the aforementioned biological functions, certain compounds extracted from *A. argyi* leaves also exhibit anti-aging, neurodegeneration prevention, cough relief, and hemostatic effects. Xu et al. [45] dried *A. argyi* leaves into moxa sticks and observed that moxa smoke altered serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine levels in mouse brains—key neurotransmitters in the central nervous system closely associated with neurological function and aging. Ha et al. [46] extracted phenolic compounds (eupatilin and jaceosidin) from Qiai *A. argyi* that attenuated hydrogen peroxide-induced neurotoxicity, suggesting potential as a food source for preventing neuropathological changes.

## 2 Application of *Artemisia argyi* in Animal Production

The rich nutritional and bioactive components of *A. argyi* have attracted attention for both medicinal and health-promoting applications. Beyond its therapeutic use, safety trials have confirmed that *A. argyi* causes no toxic effects in animals [47]. When processed into powder and added to animal feed, *A. argyi* can improve livestock performance, antioxidant capacity, immunity, and product quality. The following summary of recent research across various livestock species provides a basis for *A. argyi* utilization.

### 2.1 Pigs, Chickens, and Geese

Research has shown that feeding pigs 2% *A. argyi* leaf powder can increase daily weight gain and feed conversion efficiency while reducing feeding costs in Sanjiang white pigs [48]. Hwang et al. [49] applied traditional acupuncture using heat from burning *A. argyi* at specific acupoints to pigs with *E. coli*-induced diarrhea, achieving an 81.8% recovery rate—higher than that obtained with neomycin treatment—demonstrating the effectiveness of traditional acupuncture in controlling early-stage *E. coli* diarrhea in pigs. Studies have also found that adding *A. argyi* extracts to diets before lipopolysaccharide injection to induce inflammation in broiler chickens prevented performance decline and reduced blood cortisol, interleukin-2, and immunoglobulin G levels compared to non-supplemented groups, indicating that *A. argyi* extracts can alleviate immune stress in broilers [50]. Wu Youhua et al. [51] reported that feeding broiler chickens different proportions of *A. argyi* leaf powder promoted immune system development and improved production performance. Xu Hongrui et al. [52] observed that feeding laying hens *A. argyi* leaf powder under heat stress conditions enhanced heat stress resistance, egg production performance, and egg quality. Similar benefits have been reported for meat geese, including improved survival rates [53].

## 2.2 Sheep and Cattle

Sun Kenian [54] reported that *A. argyi* leaves could increase weight gain and improve wool yield and quality in sheep. Additionally, *A. argyi* can be combined with other Chinese medicinal herbs as feed for pregnant ewes to meet their nutritional requirements during gestation [55]. Research on dairy cows has shown that supplementation at 600 g/head/day increased milk yield, improved color uniformity, reduced off-flavors, decreased somatic cell counts, and stabilized rumen pH [56-57].

## 2.3 Rabbits and Fish

Studies have demonstrated that *A. argyi* aqueous extract improved immune organ development, intestinal growth, growth performance, and meat quality in post-weaning meat rabbits [58-59]. Wang Hua et al. [60] found that oral administration of *A. argyi* water decoction and alcohol extract to Ira rabbits increased white blood cell counts and reduced serum aspartate aminotransferase activity, indicating enhanced immunity. Liu Hongli et al. [61] reported that *A. argyi* leaf powder at 3-6% supplementation did not affect nutrient apparent digestibility, nitrogen metabolism, or muscle quality, confirming its suitability as a feed resource for meat rabbits. Additionally, feeding various fish species in ponds with pellet feed containing *A. argyi* leaf powder increased growth rates to varying degrees, demonstrating its growth-promoting effects in fish [9].

## 3 Summary

Research on *A. argyi* has expanded in recent years, gradually revealing its components and biological functions. While most reports focus on its medicinal applications and health product development, systematic studies on the application of *A. argyi* and its processed products in animal production remain relatively scarce, with underlying mechanisms poorly understood. *A. argyi* is rich in nutrients, including proteins, amino acids, minerals, and vitamins, making it a valuable plant-based feed resource. Processing *A. argyi* leaves into powder for animal feed not only provides partial nutritional requirements but more importantly delivers pharmacological and health benefits, such as promoting growth, modulating immunity, enhancing antioxidant capacity, and providing anticancer effects. Future development should focus on two directions: first, investigating optimal supplementation ratios of *A. argyi* and its by-products for different animal species and developing *A. argyi*-based bioactive nutrient omics products to better utilize this feed resource; second, scientifically extracting or fermenting *A. argyi* components to enhance active ingredient content, creating green, environmentally friendly, and healthy feed additives as antibiotic alternatives—representing a novel approach for livestock industry development.

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