

# Megazyme

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## AMMONIA

### ASSAY PROCEDURE

K-AMIA 11/05

(Not suitable for the assay of grape juice and wine;  
K-AMIAR is recommended for these samples)

(100 Assays per Kit)

*This Data Booklet is available at*  
**[www.megazyme.com](http://www.megazyme.com)** in the following languages  
**French-German-Italian-Spanish-Portuguese**



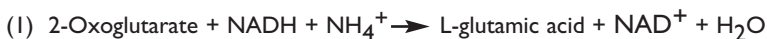
## INTRODUCTION:

Ammonia is a widely occurring natural compound, often produced as a consequence of microbial protein catabolism, and thus serves as a quality indicator of fruit juice, milk, cheese, meat, seafood, and bakery products. In the wine industry, ammonia determination is important in the calculation of yeast available nitrogen. Ammonia is also monitored in swimming pool water, waste water, and fermentation cultures, where its detection may indicate the presence of faeces, urine and microbes. Other applications include aqueous ammonia cleaning products, fertilisers, cosmetics, explosives, and as a refrigerant.

## PRINCIPLE:

In the presence of glutamate dehydrogenase (GIDH) and reduced nicotinamide-adenine dinucleotide (NADH), ammonia (as ammonium ions;  $\text{NH}_4^+$ ) reacts with 2-oxoglutarate to form L-glutamic acid and  $\text{NAD}^+$  (1).

(GIDH)



The amount of  $\text{NAD}^+$  formed is stoichiometric with the amount of ammonia. It is NADH consumption which is measured by the decrease in absorbance at 340 nm.

## SPECIFICITY, SENSITIVITY, LINEARITY AND PRECISION:

The assay is specific for ammonia. In the analysis of reagent grade ammonium sulphate, results of approx. 100 % can be expected.

The smallest differentiating absorbance for the assay is 0.005 absorbance units. This corresponds to 0.016 mg/L of sample solution at the maximum sample volume of 2.00 mL. The detection limit is 0.064 mg/L, which is derived from an absorbance difference of 0.020 with the maximum sample volume of 2.00 mL.

The assay is linear over the range of 0.2 to 7  $\mu\text{g}$  of ammonia per assay. In duplicate determinations using one sample solution, an absorbance difference of 0.005 to 0.010 may occur. With a sample volume of 2.00 mL, this corresponds to an ammonia concentration of approx. 0.016 to 0.032 mg/L of sample solution. If the sample is diluted during sample preparation, the result is multiplied by the dilution factor, F. If in sample preparation, the sample is weighed, e.g. 10 g/L, a difference of 0.02 to 0.05 g/100 g can be expected.

## INTERFERENCE:

If the conversion of ammonia has been completed within the time specified in the assay (approx. 10 min), it can be generally concluded that no interference has occurred. However, this can be further checked by adding ammonia (approx. 4  $\mu\text{g}$  in 0.1 mL) to the cuvette on completion of the reaction. A significant decrease in the absorbance should be observed.

Interfering substances in the sample being analysed can be identified by including an internal standard. Quantitative recovery of this standard would be expected. Losses in sample handling and extraction are identified by performing recovery experiments i.e. by adding ammonia to the sample in the initial extraction steps.

In alkaline buffer solution, protein fragments may slowly release ammonia which can lead to a slow creep reaction. If necessary, this creep reaction can be accounted for by extrapolation of absorbance value ( $A_2$ ) back to the time of addition of solution 3 (GIDH).

Tannins in fruit juice can lead to some inhibition of GIDH, thus fruit juices should be routinely treated with polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVPP) or activated charcoal.

## SAFETY:

The reagents used in the determination of ammonia are not hazardous materials in the sense of the Hazardous Substances Regulations. However, the buffer concentrate contains sodium azide (0.02 % w/v) as a preservative. The general safety measures that apply to all chemical substances should be adhered to.

## KITS:

Kits suitable for performing 100 assays are available from Megazyme. The kits contain the full assay method plus:

- Bottle 1:** TEA buffer (25 mL, 1.0 M, pH 8.0) plus 2-oxoglutarate (100 mM) and sodium azide (0.02 % w/v) as a preservative.  
Stable for > 2 years at 4°C.
- Bottle 2:** NADH containing tablets (twenty).  
Stable for > 3 years when stored dry (in the presence of a desiccant if possible) at 4°C or -20°C.
- Bottle 3:** Glutamate dehydrogenase solution (5.2 mL, 200 U/mL). Stable for > 2 years at -20°C.
- Bottle 4:** Ammonia standard solution (5 mL, 0.04 mg/mL) in 0.02 % (w/v) sodium azide.  
Stable for > 2 years at 4°C.

## PREPARATION OF REAGENT SOLUTIONS:

1. Use the contents of bottle 1 as supplied.  
Stable for > 2 years at 4°C.
2. Add 1 tablet from bottle 2 to 1.2 mL of solution 1 in a glass test-tube and stir intermittently over 4-6 min to obtain complete dissolution (a clear solution). **Dissolve** other tablets as required. Once dissolved, the NADH absorbance will drop slightly over time, but the reagent is suitable for use for approx. 4 days when stored at 4°C or for approx. 4 weeks when stored at -20°C.

Warm the tablet bottle to room temperature (in a desiccator if possible) before removing the tablet (to prevent condensation of moisture on the tablet container). Opening the tablet bottle while it is still cold will lead to absorption of moisture by the tablets which in turn will reduce the stability of the tablet components.

3. Use the contents of bottle 3 as supplied. Store the bottle in an upright position.  
Stable for > 2 years at -20°C.
4. Use the contents of bottle 4 as supplied. Store the bottle in an upright position.  
Stable for > 2 years at 4°C.

**NOTE:** The ammonia standard solution is only assayed where there is some doubt about the accuracy of the spectrophotometer being used or where it is suspected that inhibition is being caused by substances in the sample. The concentration of ammonia is determined directly from the extinction coefficient of NADH (page 5).

## EQUIPMENT (RECOMMENDED):

1. Glass test tubes (round bottomed; 16 x 100 mm).
2. Disposable plastic cuvettes (1 cm light path, 3.0 mL).
3. Micro-pipettors e.g. Gilson Pipetman® (100 µL).
4. Positive displacement pipettor e.g. Eppendorf Multipipette®
  - with 5.0 mL Combitip® [to dispense 0.2 mL aliquots of NADH in solution 1 (TEA buffer)].
  - with 25 mL Combitip® (to dispense 1.0 mL aliquots of TEA buffer and 2.0 mL of distilled water).
5. Analytical balance.
6. Spectrophotometer set at 340 nm.

7. Vortex mixer (e.g. IKA® Yellowline Test Tube Shaker TTS2).
8. Stop clock.
9. Whatman No.1 (9 cm) filter papers.

## PROCEDURE:

**Wavelength:** 340 nm  
**Cuvette:** 1 cm light path (glass or plastic)  
**Temperature:** ~ 25°C  
**Final volume:** 2.35 mL  
**Sample solution:** 0.2-7.0 µg of ammonia per cuvette  
 (in 0.1-2.0 mL sample volume)

**Read against air** (without a cuvette in the light path) or against water

Pipette into cuvettes	Blank	Sample
distilled water (at ~ 25°C)	2.10 mL	2.00 mL
sample	-	0.10 mL
solution 2 (NADH/TEA buffer)	0.20 mL	0.20 mL
Mix*, read the absorbances of the solutions ( $A_1$ ) after approx. 5 min and start the reactions immediately by addition of:		
solution 3 (GIDH)	0.05 mL	0.05 mL
Mix*, read the absorbances of the solutions ( $A_2$ ) at the end of the reaction (approx. 10 min). If the reaction has not stopped after 10 min, continue to read the absorbances at 2 min intervals until the absorbances remain the same or decrease constantly over 2 min**.		

\* for example with a plastic spatula or by gentle inversion after sealing the cuvette with a cuvette cap or Parafilm®.

\*\* if this “creep” rate is greater for the sample than that of the blank, extrapolate the absorbances (sample and blank) back to the time of the addition of solution 3 (GIDH).

## CALCULATION:

Determine the absorbance difference ( $A_1 - A_2$ ) for both blank and sample. Subtract the absorbance difference of the blank from the absorbance difference of the sample, thereby obtaining  $\Delta A_{\text{ammonia}}$ .

The value of  $\Delta A_{\text{ammonia}}$  should as a rule be at least 0.100 absorbance units to achieve sufficiently accurate results.

The concentration of ammonia can be calculated as follows:

$$c = \frac{V \times MW}{\epsilon \times d \times v} \times \Delta A_{\text{ammonia}} \quad [\text{g/L}]$$

**where:**

V = final volume [mL]

MW = molecular weight of ammonia [g/mol]

$\epsilon$  = extinction coefficient of NADH at 340 nm

$$= 6300 \text{ [l} \times \text{mol}^{-1} \times \text{cm}^{-1}\text{]}$$

d = light path [cm]

v = sample volume [mL]

**It follows for ammonia:**

$$c = \frac{2.35 \times 17.03}{6300 \times 1.0 \times 0.10} \times \Delta A_{\text{ammonia}} \quad [\text{g/L}]$$

$$= 0.06352 \times \Delta A_{\text{ammonia}} \quad [\text{g/L}]$$

If the sample has been diluted during preparation, the result must be multiplied by the dilution factor, F.

When analysing solid and semi-solid samples which are weighed out for sample preparation, the content (g/100 g) is calculated from the amount weighed as follows:

**Content of ammonia**

$$= \frac{c_{\text{ammonia}} \text{ [g/L sample solution]}}{\text{weight}_{\text{sample}} \text{ [g/L sample solution]}} \times 100 \quad [\text{g/100 g}]$$

**NOTE:** These calculations can be simplified by using the Megazyme **Mega-Calc**<sup>TM</sup>, downloadable from where the product appears in the Megazyme web site ([www.megazyme.com](http://www.megazyme.com)).

## SAMPLE PREPARATION:

### 1. Sample dilution.

The amount of ammonia present in the cuvette (i.e. in the 0.1 mL of sample being analysed) should range between 0.2 and 7  $\mu\text{g}$ . The sample solution must therefore be diluted sufficiently to yield an ammonia concentration between 0.01 and 0.07 g/L.

#### Dilution Table

Estimated concentration of ammonia (g/L)	Dilution with water	Dilution factor (F)
< 0.07	No dilution required	1
0.07-0.7	1 + 9	10
0.7-7.0	1 + 99	100

If the value of  $\Delta A_{\text{ammonia}}$  is too low (e.g. < 0.100), weigh out more sample or dilute less strongly. Alternatively, the sample volume to be pipetted into the cuvette can be increased up to 2.00 mL, making sure that the sum of the sample and distilled water components in the reaction is 2.10 mL and using the new sample volume in the equation.

### 2. Sample clarification:

**Carrez reagents cannot be used for deproteinisation as their use results in significantly reduced recoveries. Perchloric or trichloroacetic acid are used as alternatives (see specific examples).**

### 3. General considerations.

**(a) Liquid samples:** clear, slightly coloured and approximately neutral, liquid samples can be used directly in the assay.

**(b) Acidic samples:** if > 0.1 mL of an acidic sample is to be used undiluted (such as wine or fruit juice), the pH of the solution should be increased to approx. 8.0 using 2 M NaOH, and the solution incubated at room temperature for 30 min.

**(c) Carbon dioxide:** samples containing a significant amount of carbon dioxide, such as beer, should be degassed by increasing the pH to approx. 8.0 with 2 M NaOH and gentle stirring, or by stirring with a glass rod.

**(d) Coloured samples:** a sample blank, i.e. sample with no GIDH, may be necessary in the case of coloured samples.

**(e) Strongly coloured samples:** if used undiluted, strongly coloured samples should be treated by the addition of 0.2 g of polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVPP)/10 mL of sample. Shake the tube

vigorously for 5 min and then filter through Whatman No. 1 filter paper.

**(f) Solid samples:** homogenise or crush solid samples in distilled water and filter if necessary.

**(g) Samples containing fat:** extract such samples with hot water at a temperature above the melting point of the fat e.g. in a 100 mL volumetric flask at 60°C. Adjust to room temperature and fill the volumetric flask to the mark with distilled water. Store on ice or in a refrigerator for 15-30 min and then filter. Discard the first few mL of filtrate, and use the clear supernatant (which may be slightly opalescent) for assay.

**(h) Samples containing protein:** deproteinise samples containing protein by adding an equal volume of ice-cold 1 M perchloric acid with mixing. Centrifuge at 1,500 g for 10 min and neutralise the supernatant with 1 M KOH. Alternatively, use trichloroacetic acid as described in sample preparation example (b) below.

## **SAMPLE PREPARATION EXAMPLES:**

### **(a) Determination of ammonia in fruit juices (e.g. grape juice/must).**

Adjust 25 mL of fruit juice to approx. pH 8.0 with 2 M KOH, quantitatively transfer to a 50 mL volumetric flask and fill to the mark with distilled water. Transfer the solution to a 100 mL beaker, add 1 g of PVPP and stir the suspension for 2 min on a magnetic stirrer. Filter an aliquot of the suspension and use the clear, slightly turbid solution for the assay. *Typically, no further dilution is required and a sample volume of 0.1 mL is satisfactory.*

### **(b) Determination of ammonia in milk.**

In a glass test-tube, accurately mix 1 mL of milk with 3 mL of 0.3 M trichloroacetic acid. Incubate at room temperature for 5 min to ensure complete precipitation of protein and then centrifuge at room temperature for 3 min at 2,000 g. Decant supernatant and, using pH test strips, neutralise with 10 M KOH (the high concentration of KOH leading to an insignificant increase in volume). Filter, and use the clear supernatant directly for the assay. *Typically, no further dilution is required and sample volumes up to 2.0 mL will be required.*

### **(c) Determination of ammonia in baking products.**

Accurately weigh approx. 10 g of representative material into a 100 mL Duran® bottle. Add 20 mL of 1 M perchloric acid and homogenise for 2 min using an Ultraturrax® or Polytron® homogeniser (or equivalent). Quantitatively transfer to a 40 mL glass beaker and adjust the pH to approx. 8.0 using 2 M KOH. Quantitatively transfer to a 100 mL

volumetric flask and adjust to the mark with distilled water (ensuring the fat containing layer is “above” the mark, and the aqueous layer is “at” the mark). Store on ice for 20 min to precipitate potassium perchlorate and allow separation of the fat. Filter, discarding the first 3-5 mL, and use the clear filtrate for the assay. *Typically, no further dilution is required and a sample volume of 0.5 mL is satisfactory.*

**(d) Determination of ammonia in meat and meat products.**

Accurately weigh approx. 5 g of representative material into a 100 mL Duran® bottle. Add 20 mL of 1 M perchloric acid and homogenise for 2 min using an Ultraturrax® or Polytron® homogeniser (or equivalent). Quantitatively transfer to a 40 mL glass beaker and adjust the pH to approx. 8.0 using 2 M KOH. Quantitatively transfer to a 100 mL volumetric flask and adjust to the mark with distilled water (ensuring the fat containing layer is “above” the mark, and the aqueous layer is “at” the mark). Store on ice for 20 min to precipitate potassium perchlorate and allow separation of the fat. Filter, discarding the first 3-5 mL, and use the clear filtrate for the assay. *Typically, no further dilution is required and a sample volume of 0.5 mL is satisfactory.*

**(e) Determination of ammonia in liquorice products.**

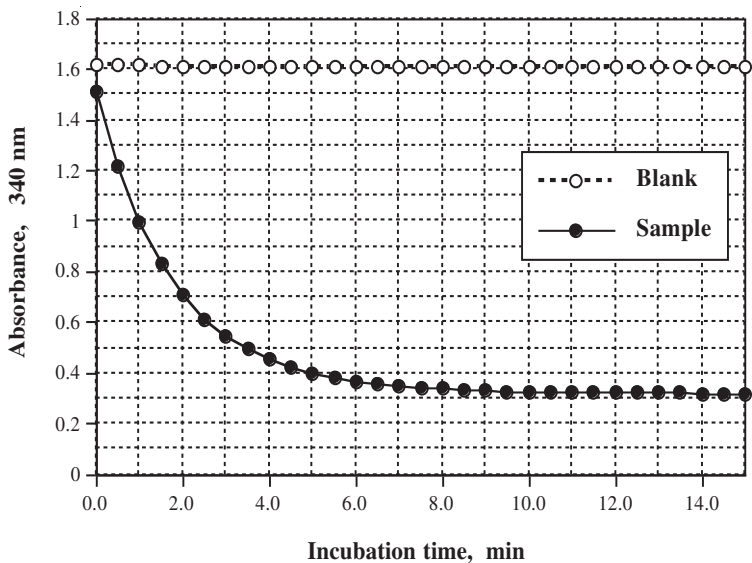
Homogenise approx. 3 g of sample using a pestle and mortar and accurately weigh approx. 1 g of representative material into a 100 mL volumetric flask. Add 60 mL of distilled water and incubate at 70°C for 10 min, or until fully dissolved. Allow to equilibrate to room temperature and fill to the mark with distilled water. Filter and use the slightly coloured filtrate for the assay. *Typically, no further dilution is required and a sample volume of 0.5 mL is satisfactory.*

**(f) Determination of ammonia in water (e.g. swimming pool water).**

The ammonia concentration of water can generally be determined without any sample treatment. *Typically, no dilution is required and sample volumes up to 2.0 mL will be required.*

**REFERENCE:**

Bergmeyer, H. U. & Beutler, H. -O. (1990). Ammonia. In *Methods of Enzymatic Analysis* (Bergmeyer, H. U., ed.), 3rd ed., **Vol. VIII**, pp. 454-461, VCH Publishers (UK) Ltd., Cambridge, UK.



**Figure 2.** Decrease in absorbance at 340 nm on incubation of 8  $\mu\text{g}$  of ammonia with glutamate dehydrogenase in the presence of NADH.

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**NOTES:**

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**Megazyme International Ireland Ltd.,  
Bray Business Park, Bray,  
Co. Wicklow,  
IRELAND**

**Telephone: (353.1) 286 1220**

**Facsimile: (353.1) 286 1264**

**Internet: [www.megazyme.com](http://www.megazyme.com)**

**E-Mail: [info@megazyme.com](mailto:info@megazyme.com)**

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