Comparison of the Effects of Gonadotropin-Releasing Hormone, Human Chorionic Gonadotropin and Progesterone on Conception Rates in Repeat Breeder Dairy Cows

N. Farzaneh, DVM, DYSc; B. Khoramian, DVM; M. Mohri, DVM, DYSc; M. Talekhan Garousi, DVM, DYSc
School of Veterinary Medicine, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

Introduction

A slower than normal rise in progesterone concentrations and a lower total progesterone concentrations have been measured in low-fertility cows and repeat breeder (RB) heifers in the first six days after estrus. Several methods have been used to attempt to increase conception rates (CR) through a greater plasma progesterone (P4) concentrations during the luteal phase, including those that increase endogenous function of the existing corpus luteum (CL), induce accessory CL, or act as a direct progesterone supplement. The aim of the present study was to determine whether supplementing with exogenous P4 or the administration of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRH) or human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) during early luteal phase could increase CR in RB cows.

Materials and Methods

A total number of 103 Holstein RB cows with a history of three to seven unsuccessful artificial inseminations (AI) and normal inter-estrus intervals, in a large dairy herd, were selected for the study. They were less than ten years of age and had no history of recent reproductive diseases. All of the selected cows were paired according to parity, milk yield, number of AI services, and body condition scores. Cows were divided into four groups: Group one cows (n=26) received 30 µg of the GnRH agonist, buserelin (Receptal; Intervet International, Holland) intramuscularly (IM) on day five to six post-AI. Cows in group two (n=25) received an IM injection of 1500 IU hCG (Chorulon; Intervet International, Holland) 5-6 days post AI. In group three (n=25) a controlled internal drug release device (CIDR; Inter Ag, New Zealand) previously used for seven days was applied to the cows on day five to six after AI and removed ten days later. Group four cows (n=27) were treated with 20 ml of sterile normal saline solution IM as placebo over the same time period after AI. Milk samples (15-20 ml) were collected five to six days after AI, just before treatment was administered for measuring P4 concentrations by an ELISA method. All cows were palpated per rectum for pregnancy diagnosis 45 days after AI. Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 9). Differences between groups with a P-value ≤ 0.05 were considered significant.

Results

CR on day 45 was significantly lower in cows in groups one and four compared to groups two and three (P<0.05). There was no significant difference in CR between groups one and four. There was also no significant difference between groups two and three. There was no significant difference in milk fat P4 concentrations among four groups. Milk fat P4 concentrations in pregnant cows and non-pregnant cows did not differ significantly between the four groups. Milk fat P4 concentrations between pregnant and non-pregnant cows in each group were compared separately. In only the second group (hCG) were P4 concentrations significantly lower in pregnant cows (P<0.05).

Significance

Progesterone supplementation via used CIDR early in the luteal phase (days five to six post-AI), increased pregnancy rates in RB cows in this study. A slower than normal rise in P4 concentrations and a lower total P4 concentrations has been measured in RB cows in the first six days after estrus. It has been reported that the highest CR occurs when day five milk P4 concentrations are between three and nine ng/ml. CR significantly decreased both above and below this range. Results of this study also showed that RB cows treated with hCG on five to six after AI had significantly higher CR than the other groups. Human chorionic gonadotrophin induces the formation of accessory CLs and increases the concentrations of P4 during the mid-luteal phase. It also promotes three follicular wave estrous cycles that may delay the occurrence of pre-ovulatory follicles around the time of maternal recognition of pregnancy. In the present study, GnRH administration on day five to six after insemination did not increase CR on Day 45. It seems that the timing of administration and the potency of GnRH, or both, may affect the ability of GnRH to alter luteal composition and subsequent P4 concentrations. In conclusion, treating RB cows with hCG or a used CIDR improved CR in this study.