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Pre-selection of high and low ovulatory responders in sheep MOET programs

M. Bruno Galarraga^{1,*}, M. Cueto¹, A. Gibbons¹, F. Pereyra-Bonnet²,

M. Subiabre¹, A. González-Bulnes³

¹ INTA Bariloche, Modesta Victoria 4450, 8400 San Carlos de Bariloche, Río Negro, Argentina

² Instituto de Ciencias Básicas y Medicina Experimental del Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires

³ Dpto. Reproducción Animal, SGIT-INIA, Avda. Puerta de Hierro s/n, 28040 Madrid, España

* Corresponding author. Tel: +54 294 442 2731; fax: +54 294 442 9600

E-mail address: brunogalarraga.m@inta.gob.ar (M. Bruno Galarraga)

Abstract

The present study evaluated the feasibility of carrying out an easy-to-handle and cost-efficient test for the pre-selection of high and low ovulatory responder ewes under superovulatory protocols. The test was based on the assessment of the number of ovulations obtained in response to the administration of a single-shot equine Chorionic Gonadotropin (eCG) treatment. The predictive value of the test was determined by comparing the number of ovulations with yields obtained in response to a multiple-dose follicle stimulation hormone (FSH) treatment. In addition, the study determined possible effects of follicular status at first FSH dose and their relationship with subsequent ovarian response. A total of 31 Merino ewes received hormonal treatment comprising the administration of 800 IU of eCG at the end of progestative treatment. Twenty-three days later, multiple-dose FSH treatment (80-mg FSH, in six decreasing doses between Days 12 to 14 of a second progestative treatment) was applied to the same ewes. The study showed a significant relationship between the number of *corpora lutea* (CL) obtained in response to eCG treatment with respect to those obtained in response to FSH treatment ($r = 0.791$; $P < 0.05$), which resulted in 84% recurrence rate. The number of embryos was greater for high in relation to low responder ewes (7.2 ± 3.7 and 4.0 ± 3.9 , respectively) ($P < 0.05$), while rates of recovery and fertilization were similar between groups ($P > 0.05$). Hence, there was a

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