Comparison of TAI at GnRH Injection and Delayed Insemination of Non-estrus Beef Heifers

Hazy R. Nielson  
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Dan J. Kelly  
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

T. L. Meyer  
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, tl.meyer@unl.edu*

Rick N. Funston  
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rfunston2@unl.edu*

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Comparison of TAI at GnRH Injection and Delayed Insemination of Non-estrus Beef Heifers

Hazy R. Nielson, Dan J. Kelly, T. L. Meyer, and Rick N. Funston

Summary

Heifers were estrus synchronized utilizing the melengestrol acetate (MGA)-prostaglandin (PG) protocol. Heifers expressing estrus were administered GnRH and either AI at GnRH injection or AI 19 hours following GnRH injection. Heifers AI from estrus detection had a higher pregnancy rate compared with heifers not expressing estrus. Pregnancy rates to AI did not differ between heifers AI immediately after GnRH compared to heifers AI 19 hours after the GnRH injection. There was no benefit to delayed AI of non-estrus beef heifers compared with traditional timed AI at GnRH injection.

Introduction

The utilization of estrus synchronization and fixed-time artificial insemination (FTAI) has improved AI efficiency, concentrating the labor and time requirement into a few d, making AI more feasible for producers (Journal of Animal Science, 2010, 88: E181–92). However an improvement in pregnancy rates typically attained when a FTAI protocol is used would increase the appeal of such protocols to producers. In a comparison of heifers synchronized and AI with either a standard FTAI protocol or a 19 h delayed AI following GnRH administration in non-estrus heifers as part of a hybrid estrus detection/FTAI protocol.

Procedure

Yearling, Angus-based, crossbred heifers (n = 453) were managed as a single herd at the Kelly Ranch (KR), Sutherland, NE, grazing dormant upland Sandhills range and offered 2.9 lb/d dried distillers grains. Alfalfa was offered to each heifer at 6.4 lb/d beginning 66 d prior to synchronization. As winter range availability decreased in the spring, alfalfa was offered ad libitum. Approximately 1 wk prior to estrus synchronization, a subset of heifers (n = 100) were transported to the West Central Research and Extension Center (WCREC), North Platte, NE. Pregnancy rates to AI did not differ between heifers AI immediately after GnRH compared to heifers AI 19 hours after the GnRH injection. There was no benefit to delayed AI of non-estrus beef heifers compared with traditional timed AI at GnRH injection.

Figure 1. Modified MGA-PG estrus synchronization protocol utilized to compare AI at GnRH injection (GnRH-I) and AI 12 h following GnRH injection (GnRH-D).
Statistical Analysis

All data was analyzed using the GLIMMIX procedure of SAS (SAS Institute, Cary, N.C.), accounting for origin, pen (KR was counted as a single pen), and AI technician as random variables. Pregnancy rate was analyzed using an odds ratio. Least squared means and SE of the proportion of pregnant heifers by treatment were obtained using the ILINK function.

Results

Heifer reproductive performance is presented in Table 1. Pre-breeding BW was similar \( (P = 0.58) \) among ESTRUS, GNRH-I, and GNRH-D treatments (773, 764, and 770 ± 12 lb, respectively). Furthermore, there was no difference \( (P = 0.46) \) in BW at pregnancy diagnosis among treatments, (829, 838, and 831 ± 13 lb; ESTRUS, GNRH-I, and GNRH-D, respectively).

Heifers in the GNRH-I group had significantly \( (P < 0.01) \) greater ADG from pre-breeding to pregnancy diagnosis compared with heifers in the ESTRUS group \((1.20 \text{ vs. } 0.89 \pm 0.13 \text{ lb/d})\). However, there was no difference in ADG either between GNRH-I and GNRH-D \((1.20 \text{ vs. } 0.95 \pm 0.13 \text{ lb/d}, P = 0.18)\) or between ESTRUS AND GNRH-D \((0.89 \text{ vs. } 0.95 \pm 0.13 \text{ lb/d}, P = 0.80)\).

Heifers expressing estrus, as determined by an activated Estrotect, represented 70% \((n = 319)\) of the herd. The proportion of pregnant heifers was significantly affected \( (P < 0.01) \) by treatment. Heifers AI on estrus, had significantly higher \( (P < 0.01) \) AI pregnancy rates compared with heifers in both GNRH-I and GNRH-D groups \((72 \text{ vs. } 56, 47 \pm 6\%)\). Pregnancy rates to AI did not differ \( (P = 0.56) \) between GNRH-I and GNRH-D \((56 \text{ vs. } 47 \pm 6\%)\). Final pregnancy rates were similar \( (P = 0.54) \) among ESTRUS, GNRH-I, and GNRH-D heifers \((92 \text{ vs. } 89 \text{ vs. } 91 \pm 4\%)\). Heifers in all groups reached a similar \( (P = 0.58) \) percentage of their mature BW prior to the breeding season \((63 \pm 1\%)\).

Previous research has shown a benefit to delayed AI, suggesting a 20 h delay is advantageous because of a more favorable uterine environment. Moreover, the delay should give females more time to attain estrus, increasing the number of heifers expressing estrus at AI (Journal of Animal Science, 2014, 92: 1747–1752). The current study, however, did not observe any advantage to delayed AI. The results of this study found no benefit to a 19 h delayed AI.

Hazy R. Nielsen, graduate student
Dan J. Kelly, Kelly Ranch, Sutherland, NE
T. L. Meyer, research technician
Rick N. Funston, professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln West Central Research and Extension Center, North Platte, NE

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Table 1. Growth and reproductive performance of heifers AI on their estrus and non-estrus heifers assigned to GNRH-P or GNRH-D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>ESTRUS</th>
<th>GNRH-I</th>
<th>GNRH-Db</th>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-breeding BW, lb</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy Diagnosis BW, lb</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post AI ADG, c lb/d</td>
<td>0.89e</td>
<td>1.20f</td>
<td>0.95e,f</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI Pregnancy Rate, %</td>
<td>70e</td>
<td>56f</td>
<td>47f</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Pregnancy Rate, %</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Mature BW, d %</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Non-estrus heifers were administered GnRH 72 h following PGF2α and immediately AI.
*Non-estrus heifers were administered GnRH 72 h following PGF2α and AI 19 h following.
*ADG from pre-breeding to pregnancy diagnosis (57 d).
*Percent mature BW based on 1,218 lb mature BW.
*Means in a row with different superscripts are different \( (P < 0.05) \).