

Use of Two Estrus Synchronization Protocols and Their Success on Pregnancy in Zebu and Crossbred Heifers at *Char* Areas of Bangladesh

Tapas Ghosh¹, Ashit Kumar Paul^{2,*}, Anup Kumar Talukder³, M. Golam Shahi Alam¹ and Farida Yeasmin Bari¹

¹Department of Surgery and Obstetrics, Faculty of Veterinary Science, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh 2202, Bangladesh

²Department of Medicine and Surgery, Faculty of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine, Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Barisal 8210, Bangladesh

³Department of Gynecology, Obstetrics and Reproductive Health, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, Gazipur 1706, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to adopt two estrus synchronization protocols in zebu and crossbred heifers and their effects on pregnancy rate after timed artificial insemination (TAI). A number of 120 cyclic heifers were allotted for two different treatment groups and one control group. Heifers under protocol A were injected with GnRH at first day followed by a single dose of PGF_{2α} at Day 11 and injection of GnRH at the day of AI; and heifers belonged to protocol B were treated with GnRH, two PGF_{2α} injections at 11 days apart and injection of GnRH at AI. AI was done at fixed time (within 72~96 hours after PGF_{2α} injection) in both protocols and pregnancy was confirmed by rectal palpation on 80~120 days of post AI. In control group; local heifers were conceived higher (30%) proportion than that of crossbred heifers (25%; $p<0.05$). In protocol A, the local breed were conceived higher (38.9%) proportion compared with crossbred (25%; $p<0.05$). In protocol B, local breed heifers were conceived higher (38.9%) proportion compared with crossbred heifers (33.3%; $p<0.05$). The overall pregnancy rate in protocol A and protocol B was 33.3% and 36.6%, respectively. The proportion of pregnancy rate of local heifers (38.9%; Protocol A) was significant ($p<0.05$) in comparison with local heifers (30%) in control group ($p<0.05$). The overall pregnancy rate between pooled control group (28.3%) and treatment group (35%) was significantly ($p<0.05$) differ from each other's. Results of present study concluded that estrus synchronization followed by fixed time AI could be applied for higher pregnancy rate in zebu and crossbred heifers.

(Key words : estrus synchronization, pregnancy rate, zebu and crossbred heifer)

INTRODUCTION

Millions of people in Bangladesh live in the island of river, called 'char' (Low lying flood and erosion-prone areas in or adjacent to major rivers). Most of them are ultra-poor. The donor organization come forward to stand beside the char dwellers and donated cattle as a living asset. Paul *et al.* (2011) reported that the major problem of the heifer (both zebu and crossbred) at char area is low pregnancy rate. There are many reasons behind this problem such as feed crisis, natural calamities, and limited access to veterinary service, negative energy balance, genetic variation and poor body condition leading to non-functional ovaries, which is considered important causes

of low pregnancy rate. But it is most of the time very difficult to overcome many of these causes in certain situation. For example, still estrus detection errors cannot be overcome and 40% cow remained undetected in Bangladesh (Shamsuddin *et al.*, 2001). As a result, researchers have thought about the alternative reproductive managements for successful achievement of the reproductive goals. Stevenson *et al.* (1996) and Peters *et al.* (1999) stated that hormonal treatment with timed artificial insemination (TAI) is one of the encouraging assistance technologies to develop elsewhere.

TAI with estrus synchronization is an effective tool for improving reproductive management in dairy cows, since it avoids the need for estrus detection. Donaldson *et al.* (1980) reported

* Financial assistance from the Department of International Development (DFID) and Government of Bangladesh (GoB) under the Char livelihoods Program (CLP) is gratefully acknowledged.

* Correspondence : E-mail : akpaul2008@gmail.com

that the PGF_{2 α} -based TAI has the advantages of facilitating AI programme. Moreover, it is not always possible to determine the functional status of the corpus luteum by rectal palpation (Chowdury *et al.*, 1998). To avoid this problem, Alam *et al.* (1993) and Butler *et al.* (2011) suggested that the double injection of PGF_{2 α} at 10 days apart may be used for estrus synchronization in cows. According to opinion of Thatcher and Chenault (1976), Alam and Dobson (1987) and Voss *et al.* (1989), administration of GnRH in the case of PGF_{2 α} induced TAI increases pituitary responses for pregnancy. GnRH treatment could be adapted to the timed insemination protocol as it increases pregnancy rate (Martinez *et al.*, 1997). Several researchers investigated the effect of GnRH on fertility using different approaches in *Bos taurus* cows (Alam *et al.*, 1993). However; at *char* in Bangladesh, there is no precise report on the use of estrus synchronization program in zebu and crossbred heifers followed by TAI. Therefore; the present study was designed to introduce and adopt two different estrus synchronization protocols and their effects on pregnancy rate in local and crossbred heifers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Animal Managements

A total number of 120 heifers were selected for the study whose body condition score (BCS) were ≥ 2.5 and age ranged from 2 to 3.5 years old. The animals were divided into two groups; control and treatment group. In control group, a total number of 60 heifers (n=40 local and n= 20 crossbred) were used and another 60 heifers were used for experimental group. Within experimental group heifers were again subdivided in equal number for treatment protocol A (n=30; n=18 local and n=12 crossbred) and B (n=30; n=18 local and n=12 crossbred). These heifers were de-wormed by broad spectrum anthelmintics with a combination of Trichlobendazole 900 mg and Levamisole 600 mg (L-T vet[®], Techno drugs Ltd. Dhaka, Bangladesh) and vaccinated against Foot and mouth disease virus (FMD), Black quarter (BQ), Haemorrhagic septicemia (HS) and Anthrax (Livestock Research Institute, Dhaka, Bangladesh). The heifer was maintained under semi stall feeding system. All these heifers were housed under straw made shed as a common animal housing in Bangladesh. All the heifers used in this study had well developed reproductive organ which were confirmed by manual palpation transrectally, and palpably free from any diseases or abnormality i.e. cervicitis, pyo-

metra, tumor. The cyclicity of heifers were confirmed through observing clear vaginal discharged and by rectal palpation and only the cyclic heifers were selected for this study.

2. Semen Used for AI

In this study, frozen semen were used for both control and treatment groups. The semen was collected from Department of Livestock services (DLS, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Dhaka, Bangladesh) and preserved in Liquid Nitrogen tank. All the semen used in this study was from Local \times Shahiwal because of its high pregnancy rate in aspect of *char* area of Bangladesh (Paul *et al.*, 2011).

3. Insemination of Heifers

The heifers under control group were observed closely by the trained owners and inseminated within 10~12 h after observing estrus by skilled technician. Heifers belonged to treatment group received AI service at fixed time.

4. Experimental Design

The heifers were synchronized for estrus with Gonadorelin, an analogue of gonadotrophin releasing hormone (GnRH), (Fertagyl[®] Inj., Intervet Ltd., Netherland) and an analogue of PGF_{2 α} (Dinoprost[®] Inj., Techno Drugs Ltd., Dhaka, Bangladesh). Two different treatment protocols (Protocol A and B) were used for the study.

5. Treatment Protocol A (GnRH-PGF_{2 α} -GnRH)

First 2.5 ml Fertagyl were injected IM followed by injection of 5 ml Dinoprost after 11 days. The heifers were inseminated within fixed time; first AI at 72 hours and second AI at 96 hours of Dinoprost injection. Further 2.5 ml Fertagyl was injected within one hour of AI.

6. Treatment Protocol B (GnRH-PGF_{2 α} -PGF_{2 α} -GnRH)

2.5 ml of Fertagyl were injected IM followed by injection of 5ml Dinoprost at Day 11 of Fertagyl injection. A repeated injection of 5 ml Dinoprost was given at Day 11 day of first Dinoprost injection. The heifers were inseminated at fixed time; first at 72 hours and second at 96 hours of second Dinoprost injection. A further of 2.5ml GnRH was injected within one hour of AI.

7. Pregnancy Diagnosis

The pregnancy was diagnosed by rectal palpation between

80~120 days post of AI.

8. Statistical Analysis

The data collected from both control and treatment groups in respect to the return to estrus or pregnancy were organized in Microsoft Excel 2003. The collected data were coded, compiled, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study by SPSS[®] software (Version 12). The chi-square test was done to test the hypothesis. The difference between values was considered significant when the *P* value was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$).

RESULTS

1. Effects of Treatment Protocol A for Induction of Estrus and Pregnancy in Heifers

In the control group; the number of heifers showed estrus and the pregnancy rate (both local and crossbred) are shown in Table 1. Among a total number of 60 heifers in control group, 70% heifers were showed estrus with a pregnancy rate of 28.3%. The 70% heifer in both local and crossbred showed estrus.

The treatment effect of Protocol A for induction of estrus and pregnancy is presented in Table 2. Out of 30 heifers, the number of heifers showed estrus was 24 of which 33.3% were

Table 1. Pregnancy rate in heifers following insemination at natural estrus

Group	No. of heifers showing estrus	No. of heifers pregnant	Pregnancy rate (%)
Zebu (n=40)	28	12	30 ^a
Crossbred (n=20)	14	5	25 ^b
Total (n=60)	42	17	28.3

^{a,b} The values within the same column differed significantly from each other ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Comparisons of pregnancy rate between control and treatment protocol A group

Group	Breed	No. of heifers	No. of heifers in estrus	No. of heifers pregnant (%)
Control	Zebu	40	28 ^a	12(30%) ^a
	Crossbred	20	14 ^c	5(25%)
Treatment protocol A	Zebu	18	15 ^b	7(38.9) ^b
	Crossbred	12	9 ^d	3(25%)

^{a~d} The values within the same column differed significantly from each other ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2. Effects of treatment protocol A on heifers for induction of estrus and pregnancy

Breed	No. of heifers	No. of heifers in estrus	No. of heifers pregnant (%)
Zebu	18	15	7 (38.9) ^a
Crossbred	12	9	3 (25) ^b
Total	30	24	10 (33.3)

^{a,b} The values within the same column differed significantly from each other ($p < 0.05$).

pregnant. With respect to breed comparison, among the total of local and cross breed heifers, the 83.3 and 75%, heifers respectively showed estrus.

The comparison between control group and treatment group (Protocol A) on estrus and pregnancy rate is given in Table 3. In treated group, zebu heifers showed highest (38.9%) proportion pregnancy than that of control group (30%).

2. Effects of Treatment Protocol B for Induction of Estrus and Pregnancy in Heifers

The effect of treatment protocol B on induction of estrus and pregnancy is presented in Table 4. Twenty six heifers out of 30 showed estrus in respond to treatment. The pregnancy

Table 4. Effects of treatment protocol B on heifers for induction estrus and pregnancy

Breed	No. of heifers	No. of heifers in estrus	No. of heifers pregnant (%)
Zebu	18	16	7 (38.9) ^a
Crossbred	12	10	4 (33.3) ^b
Total	30	26	11 (36.6)

^{a,b} The values within the same column differed significantly from each other ($p < 0.05$).

rate in treated heifers was 36.7%. When compared with local and crossbred heifers, 16 local and 10 crossbred heifers showed estrus out of 18 and 12, respectively. The pregnancy rate in local and cross breed heifers was 38.9 and 33.3%, respectively.

The comparison of pregnancy rate between control and treatment group (pooled, both A and B protocol) is presented in Table 5. The overall pregnancy rate for heifers in control and treatment group was 28.3 (17/60) and 35% (21/60), respectively.

The comparison of pregnancy rate between two treatment groups (protocol A and protocol B) is shown in Table 7. The pregnancy rates in heifers belonged to protocol A and B were 33.3 (10/30) and 36.7% (11/30), respectively.

DISCUSSION

This study was done in the island area of Jamuna River, called *char* areas, at the northern part of Bangladesh. In this study, the estrus synchronization program with fixed time AI for successful pregnancy was introduced and implemented to improve the pregnancy rate in zebu heifers and crossbred heifers.

The fertility problem of heifers and cows in that area is remarkable. Earlier, Paul *et al.* (2011) indicated that the lack of balanced feed and poor knowledge of farmer regarding cattle rearing were the core setback of low pregnancy rate in this area. The first service pregnancy rate of cows in that area was promoted to 42.7% after improving the management system (Paul *et al.*, 2011). Success of induction of estrus and pregnancy rate of local and crossbred heifers were found significantly ($p < 0.05$) differ from each other which is partially agreed with the Alam and Dobson (1987).

Higher proportion of zebu heifers showed coming into estrus than that of crossbred heifers. Similarly, the pregnancy rate was significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) in local breed heifers compared

Table 6. Comparisons of pregnancy rate between pooled control and treatment group

Group	No. of heifers	No. of heifers pregnant (%)
Control group	60	17 (28.3) ^a
Treatment group	60	21 (35) ^b

^{a,b} The values within the same column differed significantly from each other ($p < 0.05$).

Table 7. Comparisons of pregnancy rate between treatment protocol A and B

Treatment protocol	No. of heifers	Pregnancy rate (%)	<i>P</i> -value
Protocol A	30	10 (33.3)	$p > 0.05$
Protocol B	30	11 (36.7)	

with crossbred heifers. Chenault *et al.* (1990) and Stevenson *et al.* (1993) stated that the administration of an exogenous GnRH influenced directly the anterior pituitary to initiate ovulation and subsequently conception. The difference for pregnancy between control and treatment group was significantly ($p < 0.05$) differ from each other whereas in cross breed heifers between control and treated group did not show any differences 56 vs 86% (Twangiramungu *et al.*, 1992).

The pregnancy rate between zebu and crossbred heifers under protocol-B was significantly ($p > 0.05$) differ each other. The pregnancy rate was higher in local breed heifers than that of crossbred. The number of heifer in control group has showed significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher estrus signs, compared than that of treatment group. But the pregnancy rate was significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher under treatment group in both local and crossbred heifers than that of control group. The difference in pregnancy rate between treatment protocol-A and B was not significantly

Table 5. Comparison of pregnancy rate between control and treatment protocol B group

Group	Breed	No. of heifers	No. of heifers in estrus	No. of heifers pregnant (%)
Control group	Zebu	40	28 ^a	12(30) ^a
	Crossbred	20	14 ^c	5(25) ^c
Treatment group (Protocol B)	Local	18	16 ^b	7(38.9) ^b
	Crossbred	12	10 ^d	4(33.3) ^d

^{a vs b; c vs d} The values within the same column differed significantly from each other, respectively ($p < 0.05$).

($p > 0.05$) differ each other which is agreed with Hardin *et al.* (1980) who reported following an induced estrus by PGF_{2 α} injection in zebu cattle and their crosses, only 30% cows were conceived. But, Bhuyian (1990) reported that 57% conception rate in zebu and zebu crosses which were treated with two regimens of cloprostenol at an interval of 10 days. In protocol-B, the double injection of GnRH and PGF_{2 α} had significantly increased the tendency of zebu heifers to conceive compared with crossbred heifers and the overall pregnancy rate was 36.6%. This pregnancy rate is significant in context with local zebu heifers and their crosses in char areas. This study supports the fact that, local zebu cows and their crosses may be placed under the synchronization programme using only PGF_{2 α} , as these animals have been in suffering from persistent luteal tissue in the ovary (Alam and Ghosh, 1993). The heifers showed more tendencies to pregnant in double GnRH and double PGF_{2 α} treatment but were not significantly higher than double GnRH and single PGF_{2 α} treatment. From the result of the present study, after synchronization of estrus with PGF_{2 α} and GnRH, total 21 heifers were conceived out of 60 heifers and in control group 17 heifers were pregnant out of 60 heifers which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Pregnancy rate following this GnRH-PGF_{2 α} -GnRH treatment and fixed time AI was assessed in two other studies. Pregnancy rates in lactating cows are similar to those of controls (Pursley *et al.*, 1997), whereas Schmitt *et al.* (1996) reported a reduction in pregnancy rate in heifers. PGF_{2 α} treatment would reduce the incidence of sub clinical uterine infection and hasten the uterus in return to a suitably environment for fertilization (Ott and Gustafsson, 1981). It is not always possible to maintain the proper hygienic management in char areas of Bangladesh which may result the sub clinical uterine infection with persistent corpus luteum.

It is necessary to develop a programme using exogenous hormones for fixed time AI to eliminate the need for estrus detection within estrus synchronization programme especially in zebu heifers and their crosses. Before the selection of a hormonal approach one should realise the economic status of the farmers. Hormonal drugs specially the analogues of PGF_{2 α} and GnRH are expensive. GnRH-PGF_{2 α} -GnRH treatment at day 0, 7 and 8/9 respectively regardless of the stage of estrus and then fixed timed AI is an economically advantageous method for controlling reproduction (Esslemont and Mawhinney, 1996). In this study, AI on fixed timed estrus resulted increased number of conception rate than that at AI on natural

estrus. But some researchers observed higher conception rate after AI on natural estrus than fixed time (Seguin *et al.*, 1983; Zeroual, 1994). In this study single dose of 500 μ g of GnRH was used intramuscularly immediately after AI with a view to ensure synchrony between estrus and insemination. It has been reported that conception rate improves when GnRH is administered at insemination with a body condition score < 3.0 (Burke *et al.*, 1996) at insemination regardless of parity. Conception rate may be influenced positively by body condition of the treated animals with PGF_{2 α} and GnRH (Burke *et al.*, 1996). All heifers used in this study had ≥ 2.5 body condition score. In this study, GnRH is given within 72 to 96 hours after last PGF_{2 α} injection which was partially agreed with Thatcher *et al.* (1993) who was stated that the injection of GnRH closer to the onset of estrus may be beneficial in increasing conception rate in in both zebu and crossbred heifers.

It may be concluded that the zebu and crossbred heifers could be treated with estrus synchronization protocols for higher pregnancy rate in Bangladesh. Protocol A (GnRH-PGF_{2 α} -GnRH) might be good as it would be economic than using protocol B (GnRH-PGF_{2 α} -PGF_{2 α} -GnRH) However, to get a hold consistent and accuracy of result, protocol A may be tested with a large population of heifers with hormonal assay and ultrasonography for field application.

REFERENCES

- Alam MGS and Dobson H. 1987. Pituitary responses to a challenge test of GnRH and oestradiol benzoate in postpartum and regularly cyclic cows. *Animal Reproduction Science* 14:1-9.
- Alam MGS and Ghosh A. 1993. Reproductive patterns of indigenous cows in Bangladesh and effect of Urea-Molasses-Mineral block (UMMB) on puberty and postpartum ovarian activity. Proc. Final Research Co-ordination Meeting of an FAO/IAEA Co-ordinated Research Programme Organized by Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Technique in Food and Agriculture Bangkok, Thailand, 1-5 February :53-63.
- Alam MGS, Yeasmin F, Ahmed JU and Rahman M. 1993. Oestrus synchronization in zebu cows with Estrumate[®]. *Bangladesh Journal of Animal Science* 22:87-92.
- Bhuyian MR. 1990. Synchronization of oestrus in Zebu cattle with Estrumate[®]. MS Thesis, Department of Surgery and Obstetrics, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh.

- Burke JM, Sota RL, Risco CA, Staples CR and Schmitt EJP. 1996. Evaluation of timed insemination using gonadotropin releasing hormone agonist in lactating dairy cows. *Journal of Dairy Science* 79:1385-1393.
- Butler SAA, Phillips NJ, Boe-Hansen GB, Bo GA, Burns BM, Dawson K and McGowan MR. 2011. Ovarian responses in *Bos indicus* heifers treated to synchronise ovulation with intravaginal progesterone releasing devices, oestradiol benzoate, prostaglandin $F_{2\alpha}$ and equine chorionic gonadotrophin. *Animal Reproduction Science* 129:118-126.
- Chenault JR, Kratzer DD, Rzepkowski RA and Goodwin MC. 1990. LH and FSH response of Holstein heifers to fertirelin acetate, gonadoreline and buserelin. *Theriogenology* 34:81-98.
- Chowdury MK, Shamsuddin M, Bhuyan MMU and Alam MGS. 1998. Bovine luteal response to prostaglandin preparation available in local market. *The Bangladesh Veterinarian* 15: 7-12.
- Donaldson LE. 1980. The development and marketing of oestrus synchronisation in cattle in Australia using prostaglandin. *Theriogenology* 14:391-401.
- Esslemont RJ and Mawhinney I. 1996. The cost benefits of a planned breeding routine for dairy cows. *Cattle Practice* 4: 293-300.
- Hardin DR, Warnick AC, Wise TH, Schultze RH and Fields MJ. 1980. Artificial insemination of subtropical commercial beef cattle following synchronization with cloprostenol ICI (80996). I. Fertility. *Theriogenology* 14:249-254.
- Lauderdale JW, McCallislen JF, Kra DP and Moody EL. 1981. Use of prostalandin $F_{2\alpha}$ in cattle breeding. *Acta Veterinaria Scand.* 77:181-191.
- Martinez MF, Bergfelt DR, Adams GP, Kastelic JP and Mapletoft RJ. 1997. Synchronization of follicular wave emergence and its use in an oestrus synchronization programme. *Theriogenology*. 47:145.
- Ott RS and Gustafsson BK. 1981. Therapeutic application of Prostaglandin for potpartum infection. *Acta Veterinaria Scand.* 71:363-369.
- Paul AK, Alam MGS and Shamsuddin M. 2011. Factors that limit first service pregnancy rate in cows at char management of Bangladesh. *Livestock Research for Rural Development* 23: Article #57.
- Peters AR, Mawhinney I and Drew SB. 1999. Development of a gonadotrophin-releasing hormone and prostaglandin regimen for the planned breeding of dairy cows. *Veterinary Research* 145:516-521.
- Pursley JR, Kosorok MW and Wiltbank MC. 1997. Reproductive management of lactating dairy cows using synchronization of ovulation. *Journal of Dairy Science* 80:301-306.
- Schmitt EJP, Diaz TC and Barros CM. 1996. Differential response of the luteal phase and fertility in cattle following ovulation of the first-wave follicle with human chorionic gonadotropin or an agonist of GnRH. *Theriogenology* 31: 149-164.
- Seguin BE, Tate DJ and Otterby DE. 1983. Use of cloprostenol in a reproductive management system for dairy cattle. *Journal of American Veterinary Medicine Association* 183: 537.
- Shamsuddin M, Bhuyan MMU, Sikder TK, Sugulle AH, Chandra PK and Alam MGS. 2001. Constraints limiting the efficiency of artificial insemination of cattle in Bangladesh. *International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA-TECDOC-1220*, 9-27.
- Stevenson JS, Kobayashi Y, Shipka MP and Rauchholz KC. 1996. Altering conception of dairy cattle by gonadotropin-releasing hormone preceding luteolysis induced by prostaglandin $F_{2\alpha}$. *Journal of Dairy Science* 79:402-410.
- Stevenson JS, Phatak AP, Rettmer I and Stewart RE. 1993. Post insemination administration of receptal; follicular dynamics, duration of cycle, hormonal responses and pregnancy rates. *Journal Dairy Science* 76:2536-2547.
- Thatcher WW and Chenault JR. 1976. Reproductive physiological responses of cattle to exogenous prostaglandin $F_{2\alpha}$ alpha. *Journal of Dairy Science* 59:1366-1375.
- Thatcher WW, Drost M, Savio JD, Macmillan KL, Entwistle KW, Schmitt EJ, Sota RL, De La and Morris GR. 1993. New clinical uses of GnRH and its analogues in cattle. *Theriogenology* 31:149-164.
- Twangirungu H, Guilbault LA, Proulx J and Dufour JJ. 1992. Synchronization of oestrus and fertility in beef cattle with two injections of buserelin and prostaglandin. *Theriogenology* 38:1131-1144.
- Voss HJ, Allen SE, Foote RH, Im P, Kim CK and Aquadro P. 1989. Buserelin in a superovulatory regimen for Holstein cows. Pituitary and ovarian hormone response in an experimental herd. *Theriogenology* 31:371-384.
- Zeroual A. 1994. Approche botechnologique pour ameliorer in synchronization de loestrus chez le bovin de boucherie et intensifier lutinization de insemination artificielle. MS thesis. Universite Laval. Quebec, Canada.