

**EFFECTS OF SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING ON
REPRODUCTIVE FUNCTIONS OF SMALL RUMINANTS**

**A Thesis submitted for the degree of
MASTER of RURAL SCIENCE
of The University of New England**

By

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December, 1994

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my humble and sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor R.A. Leng and Dr. G.N. Hinch for their guidance, encouragement and friendly criticisms during the period of my candidature. During my candidature, Dr. G.N. Hinch was also involving with most of my data collections and conducting laparoscopy which for that I have no words to express my gratitude feelings. I certainly learned a great deal from him.

I also would like to record my gratitude to F. Ball and S. Stachiew (Department Biochemistry, Microbiology and Nutrition) for their technical assistance, Michael Ruae (Department of Animal Science) and Geoff Green (Farm Manager, CSIRO - Chiswick) for their help with the data collection.

My thanks also are for all the post-graduate candidate colleagues, those that study ruminant nutrition at the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Nutrition; for their support and help during my candidature.

This present work couldn't be possibly done without the warm concern from Dra. Cornelia Hendratno and her husband Hendratno MSc. at the Centre for Application Isotopes and Radiation, National Atomic Energy Agency - Indonesia. I acknowledge a special gratitude for them. Thanks also to all my colleagues and technicians at the Agency and to Ir. Siti Suyatmi and her staff from Provinces Livestock Service of Central Java Province in Ungaran, where the author was conducting field trial.

A special thanks is also forwarded to Dr. David R. Evan, who helps the author with the grammatical English expression.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to my wife and son; Atik and Adit for their support, understanding and patience during my absence from Indonesia for the completion of my study at the University of New England, and also to my parents whom the prayers and blessing were the invisible help for me.

Table of contents

Preface	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of contents	iii
List of tables	vi
List of figures	viii
List of appendixes	x
Summary	xi
CHAPTER ONE	1
General Introduction	1
CHAPTER TWO	3
Literature Review (Interaction of nutrition and reproduction)	3
2.1 Introduction	3
2.2 The manipulation of reproductive hormones	5
2.2.1 Oestrus cycles	5
2.2.2 Anoestrus	15
2.3 Feeding strategy for improving the reproductive performance efficiency of ruminants	16
2.3.1 Modification of rumen fermentation	17
2.3.2 Effects of rumen manipulation on reproductive performance of ruminants	19
2.4 The role of nutrition in reproductive performance	23
2.4.1 Effects of nutrition on oestrous animals	24
2.4.2 Effects of nutrition on pregnancy	27
2.4.3 Effects of nutrition on anoestrous animals	30
2.5 Conclusions	34

CHAPTER THREE 35

Experiment I (The effect of protein nutrition on reproductive parameters in cycling ewes) 35

3.1 Introduction 35

3.2 Materials and methods 37

 3.2.1 Location 37

 3.2.2 Animals 37

 3.2.3 Diets and feeding 37

 3.2.4 Experimental procedures 38

 3.2.5 Lithium-CSP measurement 39

 3.2.6 Laparoscopy procedure 40

3.3 Data Analysis 42

3.4 Results 43

 3.4.1 Cottonseed pellet intake estimation 43

 3.4.2 Effect of cottonseed supplementation on ovulation rate 45

3.5 Discussion 53

 3.5.1 Lithium-cottonseed pellet intake 53

 3.5.2 Effect of CSP supplementation to ovarian functions 54

3.6 Conclusions 58

CHAPTER FOUR 59

Experiment II (Effect of *post-partum* supplementation on reproductive activity in anoestrous, lactating ewes) 59

4.1 Introduction 59

4.2 Materials and methods 61

 4.2.1 Location 61

 4.2.2 Animals 61

 4.2.3 Diets and feeding 61

 4.2.4 Experimental procedures 62

 4.2.5 Plasma LH concentration 63

4.3 Data Analysis 66

4.4 Results 67

4.5 Discussion 73

4.6 Conclusions 79

CHAPTER FIVE	80
Experiment III {The effect of <i>Pre-</i> and <i>Post-partum</i> supplementation on reproductive performance of Ettawa Cross Bred Goats in Central Java (Indonesia)}	80
5.1 Introduction	80
5.2 Material and methods	82
5.2.1 Experiment 1 (Laboratory trial)	82
5.2.1.1 Locations	82
5.2.1.2 Animals	82
5.2.1.3 Diets and feeding	82
5.2.1.4 Experimental procedures	84
DM and OM determination	84
CP determination	84
pH of rumen fluid	85
N-ammonia determination	85
Total VFA determination	85
Rumen microbial growth determination with ³² P	86
Intake determination	87
CP supplement degradability	87
5.2.2 Experiment 2 (Field trial)	89
5.2.2.1 Locations	89
5.2.2.2 Animals	89
5.2.2.3 Diets and feeding	89
5.2.1.4 Experimental procedures	90
RIA-Progesterone method	91
5.3 Data analysis	93
5.4 Results	94
5.4.1 Experiment 1 (Lab. trial)	94
5.4.2 Experiment 2 (Field trial)	98
5.5 Discussion	106
Effects of UMMB+GS supplementation on rumen function	106
Effects of UMMB+GS supplementation on reproductive function	107
5.6 Conclusions	112
CHAPTER SIX	114
General conclusions	114
General recommendations	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY	117
APPENDIXES	140

List of Tables

Table number	Title	Page number
2.1	Effects of UMMB supplements on reproductive performance of Ettawa Cross Breeds goats fed with mix cut and carry grass or forages in Sumberrejo Kendal.	21
3.1	Transformation of pellet intake into pellet categories.	43
3.2	Mean value (\pm sem) of number of corpora lutea (ovulation rate), follicles, and ovarian total stimulation (CL + F) found by laparoscopy, proportion of ewes showing oestrus and daily liveweight change.	46
3.3	Difference in the occurrence of CL between treatments during the experiment (T1 and T2) and after supplementation cessation (T3).	48
3.4	Ovarian function and liveweight change after the reallocation of experimental ewes.	51
4.1	Feeding treatments on the effects of protein nitrogen (CSP) and non-protein nitrogen (3 % urea) supplementation on reproductive performance of Merino and Crossbred ewes.	62
4.2	Effects of supplementation treatment on the average daily live weight loss of experimental ewes and the average daily live weight gain of lambs (ADG).	68
4.3	Effects of supplementation with OC (Group 1), OC+3% urea (Group 2) and 250 g CSP + OC (Group 3) on the reproductive performance of experimental ewes.	70
4.4	The proportion of ewes within breed classified according to oestrous and ovarian activity for three periods of observation.	71
5.1	Dry matter (DM), organic matter (OM), crude protein (CP), crude fibre (CF) and gross energy (GE) of cut-and-carry grass as basal diet, protein supplement (ground soybean) and UMMB.	83
5.2	Partial proximate analysis of basal diets fed to goats at both locations, Sumberrejo and Kaligesing, Central Java.	90

Table number	Title	Page number
5.3	Dry matter intake (DMI), apparent digestibility, rumen pH, ammonia, total VFA and <i>in vitro</i> microbial growth (incorporated ³² P) of ECB goats fed with cut-and-carry grass and additional different supplementation (G1: 100g UMMB + 50g GS; G2: 200g UMMB; G3: 100g GS and G4: grass only).	94
5.4	Estimate proportion (%) of rapid degradation at time zero (a), potential degradability (b) and rate constant of "b" (c) of dry matter (DM) and crude protein (CP) of different protein supplement samples (\pm sem).	97
5.5	Effects of 100g UMMB + 50g GS supplementation <i>pre partum</i> on gestation length, kid's birth weight, twinning cases (\pm sem) and percentage of kid survival.	98
5.6	Effects of UMMB+GS supplementation on kid ADG and milk production of experimental does (\pm sem).	100
5.7	Kid average daily gain (ADG \pm sem) and daily average of milk production (\pm sem) of does in <i>pre</i> and <i>post partum</i> supplementation groups.	101
5.8	Number of corpora lutea (CL; ovulation rate) and follicles with diameter (\emptyset) more than 6 mm (\pm sem) seen by laparoscopy on day 60 <i>post partum</i> , the proportion of CL to CL+follicles, and means of milk progesterone level (nmol/l).	103
5.9	Number of CL (ovulation rate), number of follicles and total stimulation, the proportion of CL to total stimulation and milk progesterone level from experimental animals that had a CL (\pm sem).	104

List of figures

Figure number	Title	Page number
2.1	The changes of peripheral plasma reproductive hormone concentrations during the oestrus cycle of ewe.	6
2.2	A schematic illustration of the reproductive endocrine controls showing several sites that may be manipulated in terms of controlling the reproductive system in ewes.	9
2.3	The illustration of photoneuroendocrine pathway to the LH pulse generator of the ewe.	12
2.4	Relationship of microbial growth efficiency (Y_{ATP}) and the proportion of the fermented organic matter that is partitioned into VFA and CH_4 and CO_2 , and that entering microbial cells.	19
2.5	Development of ketosis or pregnancy toxæmia in late-pregnant ewes.	30
3.1	Distribution of the pellet intake category based on lithium concentration in blood samples collected 18 hours after pellet ingestion.	44
3.2	The correlation between the number of ewes ingesting Li-CSP between estimation 1 and estimation 2.	45
3.3	Overall means of ovulation rate from each individual group and strain of ewe.	46
3.4	Mean ovulation rate at each time for each strain of ewe.	47
3.5	Correlation between ovulation rate and time during the period of the experiment for each individual treatment group post oestrus synchronisation.	47
3.6	The proportion of ewes showing oestrus during each of the 3 oestrous recording periods.	49
3.7	Correlation between liveweight and ovulation rate of each strain of experimental ewes.	50
3.8	Number of CLs found by laparoscopy technique (interpreted as ovulation rate) after the reallocation of experimental ewes.	51
3.9	Proportion of ewes showing oestrus after the reallocation of experimental ewes.	52

Figure number	Title	Page number
4.1	Daily rainfall during the period of experiment; mid December 1993 to mid March 1994.	67
4.2	Pattern of liveweight loss of ewes from each treatment group (top graph) and liveweight gain of unweaned lambs (bottom graph).	69
4.3	Plasma LH concentration for each treatment group after 50 µg synthetic GnRH administration.	72
5.1	The ingredients of urea multi nutrient molasses block (UMMB).	83
5.2	Rumen pH, N-ammonia, total VFA and microbial growth (incorporated ³² P) of ECB goats fed different supplements at different sampling times after feeding.	95
5.3	Dry matter (left graph) and crude protein (right graph) disappearance of ground soybean (Δ), mixture of UMMB+GS (□) and UMMB (●) incubated in nylon bags in the rumen.	96
5.4	Comparison of mean kid birthweight between control and supplemented ECB goats with 100g UMMB + 50g GS during the last trimester of pregnancy.	99
5.5	Regression of kid ADG from <i>post partum</i> supplemented group (●) and non-supplemented group (Δ) of does.	100
5.6	Average daily milk production of goats supplemented with UMMB+GS v non-supplemented (control) <i>post partum</i> .	101
5.7	Weekly liveweight of kids from each treatment group.	102
5.8	Average daily milk production curve of does from each treatment group.	102
5.9	Mean milk progesterone level from each treatment group monitored from day 15 to day 74 <i>post partum</i> .	103
5.10	Mean peak milk progesterone level from goats with a corpora lutea.	105

List of appendixes

Appendix number	Title	Page number
Table A1	Estimation of pellets intake based on lithium concentration in blood samples 18 hours after sheep ingested lithium-labelled pellets.	140
Table A2	Effects of cottonseed pellets supplementation on ovulation rate (number of corpora lutea), follicles, total stimulation to ovaries (number of active ovaries) and average liveweight (\pm sem) during the three periods of the experiment.	142
Figure A1	Correlation of live weight and lithium-cottonseed pellets intake in experimental animals.	143
Figure A2	Correlation of pellet intake between estimation 1 and estimation 2.	144
Table A3	Effects of additional oaten chaff, 3% urea labelled OC and OC + 250g CSP on ovulation rate (number of corpora lutea), follicles, total stimulation to ovaries (number of active ovaries) and average live weight (\pm sem) of ewes during experimental period.	145

SUMMARY

Animal nutrition and reproduction are two major components that are interrelated. To increase animal production, manipulations of those components should be emphasised. Many earlier findings have indicated that nutrition could alter reproductive functions by changing the body metabolic status or by increasing body reserves status of the animal. These two effects of nutrition are known as the 'dynamic' and 'static' effects. Increased animal production, with emphasis on animal nutrition, is reviewed (Chapter 2) in several stages of the animal's life (ie. cyclic or oestrous, pregnant, lactating and anoestrous). Also the manipulation of the reproductive system by the manipulation of reproductive hormones is discussed in relation to increased productivity. The use of several exogenous synthetic reproductive hormones indicate that there are possibilities for improving some reproductive traits both with and without any concern with the nutritional status of the animal. When an animal is in the stage above critical level (ie. above maintenance) and the availability of feed is not a problem, improvement in productivity may be possible, whilst additional attention to nutrition is necessary for improvement when feed is inadequate.

In this thesis a series of experiments is reported and most of these experiments were carried out in the field, stressing the effects of protein supplementation. The experiment in Chapter 3 utilised cycling ewes. The aim of this experiment was to monitor by observing the number of corpora lutea, whether cottonseed pellets (CSP; 40% bypass protein) supplementation for the period of two oestrous cycles would alter ovulation rate. Animals were grazed on improved pasture on a rotational basis with initial pasture availability of 1.45 tonnes DM/ha. Results from this investigation indicated that CSP supplementation did not perturb ovulation rate during the supplementation period and no residual effects were found on ovulation rate after supplementation cessation. In this experiment there was an indication that energy supplementation is also required to alter ovulation rate, besides additional protein, since liveweights of all experimental ewes were not significantly different.

The next experiment, Chapter 4, utilised lactating ewes, rearing either single or multiple litters out of the breeding season. The objective of this investigation was to assess whether protein supplementation of anoestrous ewes could influence the onset of oestrus; and to assess this, changes in the sensitivity of the pituitary gland to exogenous gonadotrophin releasing hormones (GnRH) were observed. The sensitivity of the pituitary

to exogenous GnRH was determined by measuring the level of plasma luteinizing hormone released from the pituitary gland. Animals were grazed on improved pasture on a rotational basis with initial pasture availability of 1.5 tonnes DM/ha. Oaten chaff (OC) was provided as an additional basal diet to these ewes. Urea supplementation, as the source of non-protein nitrogen, was compared with CSP supplementation, as the source of bypass protein. Results from this investigation showed that neither onset of oestrus nor ovarian activities changed due to supplementation. However, pituitary sensitivity to exogenous GnRH of experimental ewes fed with OC+urea showed greater response as compared to the other two treatment groups. However, this change was not followed by more ewes ovulating and showing oestrus in the next observation as indicated by no significant difference in the ovulation rate nor in the proportion of ewes showing oestrus compared to other treatment groups.

In Chapter 5, two experiments were conducted. The first experiment, as a laboratory trial, aimed to identify an appropriate mixture of supplements using agricultural by-products located in Central Java, Indonesia. From this experiment a mixture of urea-multinutrient-molasses block (UMMB) and ground soybean (GS) supplemented to Ettawa crossbred (ECB) goats significantly stimulated rumen microbial growth and rumen ammonia. Therefore, this supplement was used in the second experiment, a field trial. The latter investigation here aimed to determine a strategic supplementation *pre* and *post partum* of pregnant goats fed cut-and-carry grass/forages/shrubs as basal diets which would improve their reproductive performance. Supplementation feeding commencing at day 120 pre parturition and ceased on 40 days after parturition was the best system increasing reproductive performance of ECB goats by increasing kid birth weight and reducing the mortality percentage. However, this UMMB and GS supplementation did not stimulate ovarian activity *post partum* of ECB goats.

Most of the supplement feeding systems in this series of experiments were focusing on the effects of protein supplementation, either by bypass protein or via the stimulation of microbial growth. The maintenance of energy was assumed to be fulfilled from utilisation of basal diets fed to the animal during the experimental period. Environmental factors were beyond control as experimental treatments, and so experiments in Chapters 3 and 4 gave results contrary to those of previous studies, as discussed in Chapter 2.