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EFFECT OF UTERINE PALPATION 25 DAYS AFTER BREEDING
ON BRAHMAN COWS

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SUMMARY

Uterine palpation was administered to Brahman cows 25 days after breeding to determine if the palpation could result in decreased pregnancy rates. Uterine palpation did not affect pregnancy rates.

INTRODUCTION

Uterine palpation, when administered to early pregnant cows, may cause embryonic losses. Usually the techniques that tend to cause embryonic losses are traumatic in nature. Membrane slipping and actually feeling for the conceptus can be damaging to the early pregnancy. Quite often, cows are palpated without prior knowledge of their reproductive status. Under these conditions the early pregnant cow is at risk of abortion. This experiment was to see if gentle massage of the uterus has a deleterious effect upon pregnancy rate.

PROCEDURES

Thirty-five Brahman cows were used in this experiment. Upon breeding the cows were observed closely for return to estrus. If a cow did not return to estrus by 25 days after breeding, she was considered to be in early pregnancy. At this time each cow was assigned to either serve as a control or to receive two minutes of uterine massage. Uterine palpation was performed in the following manner: the uterus was carefully manipulated so that each horn could be felt. A gentle, massaging motion of the fingers was used while trying to determine if one uterine horn was larger than the other as if fluid buildup had occurred. Even though this was at too early a stage for accurate pregnancy determination, the embryo was very vulnerable at this time. The cows were then monitored closely for estrus and palpated again 45 days after breeding. At this time pregnancy was easy to detect and pregnancy rate was determined.

RESULTS

In the group which had received uterine palpation 25 days after breeding, 16 out of 17 (94%) were still pregnant 45 days after breeding. In the control group, which did not receive uterine palpation 25 days after breeding, 15 out of 18 (83%) were still pregnant 45 days after breeding. These results indicate that gentle uterine palpation can be performed on very early pregnant cows without causing abortion. The recommendation is, when palpating cows at unknown reproductive stages, take care to avoid undue trauma to the uterus until the reproductive status of the cow is determined. If this practice is followed, unnecessary embryonic losses will be avoided.