



Original Article

Comparative Efficacy of Estrus Induction Protocols Using PGF2 α Alone Versus OvSynch and Select Synch in Dairy Cattle in Algeria



Ahmed Boucif^{1,2*}, Abdelmadjid Nouia^{1,2}, Mustapha Nabi³, Omar Salhi³, Nadjat Amina Khelifi Touhami³, Nassim Ouchenec³

1. Institute of veterinary Sciences, University of Tiaret, Tiaret, Algeria.

2. Laboratory of Farm Animal Reproduction, University of Tiaret, Tiaret, Algeria.

3. Institute of Veterinary Sciences, University of Sâad Dahlab Blida, Blida, Algeria.



How to cite this article Boucif A, Nouia A, Nabi M, Salhi O, Touhami NAKh, Ouchenec N. Comparative Efficacy of Estrus Induction Protocols Using PGF2 α Alone Versus OvSynch and Select Synch in Dairy Cattle in Algeria. *Archives of Razi Institute Journal*. 2025; 80(5):1137-1142. <https://doi.org/10.66224/ARI.80.5.3536>

doi DOI: 10.66224/ARI.80.5.3536

Article info:

Received: 29 Mar 2025

Accepted: 11 May 2025

Published: 01 Sep 2025

Keywords:

Dairy cow, Estrus induction, PGF2 α , OvSynch, Select synch

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The objective of this study is to evaluate the efficacy of estrus induction protocols based on prostaglandin F2 α (PGF2 α), compared with an OvSynch-type variant and the Select Synch protocol, in terms of reproductive performance in dairy cows in Algerian farms.

Materials & Methods: A total of 105 gynecologically intact cows, aged 2 to 5 years, including 39 primiparous and 66 multiparous cows of Montbéliarde (66) and Holstein (39) breeds were divided into three groups. In the first group, cows received two injections of PGF2 α at an 11–14-day interval, with a dose of 25 mg per cow of dinoprost[®]. In the “OvSynch” and “select synch” groups, cows were treated with an injection of 100 μ g gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) (cystorelin[®]) on day 0, followed by an injection of 25 mg PGF2 α (dinoprost[®]) on day 7. Only the “Select Synch” group received a second injection of 100 μ g GnRH on day 9. Cows were inseminated based on observed estrus at the end of each protocol. Pregnancy was diagnosed via ultrasound at day 30 post-AI and confirmed by trans-rectal palpation on day 45.

Results: Estrus response rates were 74%, 48.6%, and 40% ($P>0.05$), while average pregnancy rates were 54.4%, 31.4%, 28.6% ($P<0.005$, corresponding to conception rates of 73.1%, 65%, and 71.4% ($P>0.005$) for groups 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Given its simplicity, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency, the prostaglandin-only protocol is recommended for cows inseminated based on observed estrus.

Conclusion: Protocols combining GnRH with PGF2 α allow estrus synchronization, reducing the need for daily estrus detection (EI) and additional handling.

* Corresponding Author:

Ahmed Boucif, Professor.

Address: Institute of Veterinary Sciences, University of Tiaret, Tiaret, Algeria.

Tel: +213 (55) 5666888

E-mail: boucifah@gmail.com



Copyright © 2025 The Author(s);
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).
Noncommercial uses of the work are permitted, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

In Algeria, the bovine herd constitutes only 6% of the nation's total livestock population, with the cattle numbers consistently remaining below 2 million heads for several years [1]. In this context, optimizing reproductive efficiency is crucial for enhancing the productivity of dairy operations. Holstein cattle, renowned for their high milk yield, dominate the dairy industry; however, their production levels are significantly influenced by various factors, particularly those related to management practices. One major challenge is the often low estrus detection rate, which in some cases falls below 50% [2]. To address these challenges, hormonal protocols have been developed to improve estrus synchronization and reproductive performance. Prostaglandins, especially PGF₂ α , have been extensively investigated due to their strong luteolytic action, which is fundamental for initiating a new estrous cycle [3, 4]. Recent studies have shown that precise manipulation of follicular and luteal dynamics not only enhances reproductive efficiency but also increases the overall profitability of dairy farms when implemented in close collaboration with farmers [5]. Moreover, the addition of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) to prostaglandin-based protocols has emerged as a promising strategy. GnRH facilitates the regulation of follicular growth, thereby enabling the initiation of treatment at any stage of the estrous cycle and potentially overcoming the limitations imposed by low estrus detection rates [6].

Despite the proven success of these protocols in North and South America, their adoption in Africa remains limited [7]. Against this backdrop, the objective of the present study is to compare the efficacy of estrus induction protocols using prostaglandins alone versus those combining prostaglandins with GnRH in dairy cows. In doing so, the study aims to provide insights into optimizing reproductive management practices on Algerian dairy farms, ultimately contributing to improved productivity and economic gains for local producers.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Study location and animals

This study was conducted in two large dairy cattle farms located in the Setif region of Algeria, situated at an altitude of 1,080 meters, with geographical coordinates of 36°11'N latitude and 5°24'E longitude.

A total of 105 cyclic females, confirmed by trans-rectal palpation and aged between 2 and 5 years, including 66 Montbeliarde and 39 Holstein cows, were included in this study. The selected cows were free from anatomical or reproductive disorders and had a body condition score (BCS) ranging from 2 to 3, according to the Campanile et al. [8] scale reproduction occurred between 55 and 90 days postpartum. The calculated reproductive performance parameters were calculated as follows:

Estrus induction (EI) rate: The percentage of females observed in estrus relative to the total number of females subjected to reproduction in each group.

Conception rate (CR): The percentage of pregnant females relative to the total number of inseminated females in each group.

Pregnancy rate (PR): The percentage of diagnosed pregnant females relative to the total number of treated females in each group.

2.2. Experimental protocols

The animals were randomly assigned to three groups of 35 cows each treatments included either prostaglandins alone (two injections) or prostaglandins combined with a single (GP) or double (GPG) dose of GnRH. The treatment protocols were as follows:

Protocol 1 (PGF₂ α alone): Cows received two intramuscular injections of 25 mg dinoprost at an interval of 11 to 14 days, depending on whether they were heifers or cows. Artificial insemination (AI) was performed based on observed estrus after the first PGF₂ α injection and between 72 and 96 hours after the second injection.

Protocol 2 (OvSynch variant): Cows received an intramuscular injection of 100 μ g cystorelin (GnRH analogue) on day 0, followed by an intramuscular injection of 25 mg dinoprost (PGF₂ α analogue) on day 7. A second dose of 100 μ g cystorelin was administered on day 9. Cows showing signs of estrus were inseminated 12 to 18 hours after the second GnRH injection.

Protocol 3 (select Synch variant): Each cow received an intramuscular injection of 100 μ g cystorelin on day 0, followed by an intramuscular injection of 25 mg dinoprost on day 7. Cows observed in estrus were inseminated 8 to 12 hours after the end of the protocol.

2.3. Estrus detection rates

Estrus detection was based on visual observation, conducted twice daily for at least 30 minutes. Cervical mucus permeability on the day of insemination was also used as a confirmatory sign of estrus. Cows were inseminated on heat observed with artificial insemination AI.

Pregnancy diagnosis was performed by echography at day 30 post-insemination, and confirmed by trans-rectal palpation at day 45.

2.4. Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed using SAS statistical software, version 9.12. The objective was to assess the effect of the treatment on estrus response, pregnancy, and conception rates among the three treatment groups. Significant differences in reproductive performance among the tested cows were determined using the chi-square test, with the significance level set at $P < 0.05$.

3. Results

The Table 1 compares the effectiveness of three hormonal protocols (PGF_{2α}, GPG, and GP) on estrus, conception, and gestation rates in 105 cows. The PGF_{2α} protocol proves to be the most effective, with an estrus rate of 74.28%, a conception rate of 73.1%, and a gestation rate of 54.4%, all significantly higher than those observed in the other groups ($P < 0.01$ or $P = 0.05$). In contrast, the GPG protocol shows intermediate results, with an estrus rate of 48.6%, a conception rate of 70.58%, and a lower gestation rate (34.28%). The GP protocol is the least effective, with respective rates of 40%, 64.28%, and 25.71%, indicating reduced efficiency.

Across all 105 cows studied, the estrus rate is 54.28%, the conception rate reaches 70.17% among cows in estrus, and the overall gestation rate is 38.09%.

Statistical analysis highlights significant differences among the protocols, confirming the superiority of PGF_{2α} in improving bovine reproduction. In protocol 1, 26 cows (74.28%) exhibited estrus between day 1 and day 18. Only 27% of them showed estrus after the first PGF_{2α} injection, while 73% responded following the second injection. For protocol 2 (GPG), 17 out of 35 cows (48.6%) were observed in estrus at the end of the protocol, 8 cows (47%) showed estrus at day 10 and 9 cows (53%) exhibited estrus two days later.

For protocol 3 (GP), 14 out of 35 cows (40%) displayed estrus at the end of the protocol, with 78.6% (11/14) of them showing signs between day 9 and day 12.

4. Discussion

The present results indicate that the PGF_{2α} protocol is superior significantly improves reproductive performance in cows, as evidenced by significantly higher estrus (74.28%), conception (73.1%), and gestation (54.4%) rates compared to the GPG and GP protocols. In protocols based solely on prostaglandins, the synchronization rates of estrus vary from 38% to 97%, depending on the timing and dispersion of estrus onset [4]. The delay in the onset of estrus depends on the stage of the follicular wave at the time of the PGF_{2α} injection, generally ranging from two to five days, occasionally extending up to eight days [9]. The variability in estrus dispersion after a single PGF_{2α} injection makes systematic insemination more challenging. Grimard et al. [4] reported that only 60% of cycling cows were synchronized and inseminated based on observed estrus after the first prostaglandin injection. According to the same authors, 55% to 65% of treated cows did not exhibit observable estrus after the first injection, which can generally be explained by discreet estrus signs or treatment failure [4]. In our study, only 27% of cows exhibited estrus after the first injection, compared to 73% of females observed in estrus after the second PGF_{2α} injection, resulting in an overall improved rate of 74%. Estrus rates

Table 1. Comparison of estrus, conception, and gestation rates in cows using three different hormonal protocols

Protocols	Estrus Rates (%)	Conception Rate	Gestation Rate
1 (PGF _{2α}) (n=35)	26 (74.28)	19 (73.1)	19 (54.4)
2 (GPG) (n=35)	17 (48.6)	12 (70.58)	12 (34.28)
3 (GP) (n=35)	14 (40)	9 (64.28)	9 (25.71)
Overall (n=105)	57 (54.28)	40/57 (70.17)	40/105 (38.09)
P	0.01	0.05	0.01

of 30.8% to 32.8% after the first PGF2 α injection have been reported in some studies [5, 10].

Meanwhile, Mialot et al. [3] reported a 70% estrus rate at the end of a protocol based solely on prostaglandins, a rate similar to that observed in our study. This clearly demonstrates that a single administration of PGF2 α is not 100% effective in inducing luteolysis compared to protocols based on two injections of PGF2 α , with the second injection always administered in the presence of a mature corpus luteum. In another study aimed to test the dose and route of administration of PGF2 α , no significant difference in the efficiency of luteolysis was found [11]. However, the variability of the response appears to be greater with reduced doses.

Regarding gestation rates, Mialot et al. [3] reported rates close to 53.3% based on observed estrus compared to only 32.5% following blind inseminations after the second PGF2 α injection [3], rates comparable to our study. Protocols combining GnRH and PGF2 α have been extensively studied in recent years in dairy cows [5, 7, 12]. GnRH enhances the likelihood of dominant follicle at the start of the protocol, thus eliminating reliance on observed estrus [6]. However, low estrus observation rates have been reported, probably due to the relatively lower estradiol concentration around the time of AI [3] and/or due to the influence of certain variability factors such as breed and parity [13]. The estrus induction rate in the "OvSynch" variant aligns with findings by Çevik et al. [2], although it is lower than in other studies [12, 14]. With a few exceptions, some studies have reported low estrus response rates [15-17], even though the estrus observation periods were not significantly different. According to the literature, gestation rates reported in the "OvSynch" protocol ranged from 27% to 40% [18-20]. Pursley et al. [6] reported gestation rates of 35.1% and 37.8% for heifers and cows, respectively. The gestation rate observed in the present study falls within the range reported in the literature, noting that ovarian and estrous responses to GnRH and PGF2 α injections depend on the day of the estrous cycle at which the protocol is initiated [21, 22].

In the Select Synch protocol, the estrus response rate recorded is similar to that reported by Stevenson et al. [15], with the exception of some studies that reported higher gestation rates [23, 24]. According to Tenhagen et al. [25], this protocol is capable of synchronizing estrus in the majority of cows in a herd at low cost. In parallel, better conception rates were observed for all three groups treated in our study, with the highest rates consistently favoring the group based solely on prostaglandins.

According to the literature, estrus synchronization protocols based on "OvSynch" have resulted in conception rates in dairy cows and heifers ranging from 30% to 75% [12, 20, 24, 26]. The rates observed in the present study fall within the range reported by these authors, showing superiority compared to those reported in other studies [15, 23].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparison of the three hormonal protocols (PGF2 α , GPG, and GP) highlights the significant superiority of the PGF2 α protocol in inducing estrus, conception, and gestation. This protocol achieved the highest rates, with 74.28% of cows exhibiting estrus, a conception rate of 73.1%, and a gestation rate of 54.4%, demonstrating its effectiveness in improving bovine reproduction. In contrast, the GPG protocol showed intermediate results, while the GP protocol was the least effective, with the lowest estrus, conception, and gestation rates. Statistical analysis confirms significant differences between the protocols ($P < 0.01$ or $P = 0.05$), reinforcing the relevance of PGF2 α in optimizing bovine reproductive performance. These findings emphasize the importance of selecting the appropriate hormonal protocol to enhance reproductive management in cattle farming.

Acknowledgements

The authors sincere gratitude to all the breeders who participated in this study.

Compliance with ethical guidelines

Experimental procedures were approved by the Institutional Committee for the Protection of Animals of the National Administration of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Algeria, Ben Aknoun, Algeria (98-11, Act of 22 August 1998).

Data availability

All of the data has been included in the manuscript.

Funding

This research did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, study design and experiments: Ahmed Boucif and Abdelmadjid Nouia; Data analysis and interpretation: Nassim Ouchenec and Nadjet Amina

Khelifi Touhami; Writing the original draft: Omar Salhi, and Nadjat Amina Khelifi Touhami; Review and editing: Ahmed Boucif, Abdelmadjid Nouia, Nassim Ouchene and Nadjat Amina Khelifi Touhami.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Souames S, Berrama Z. Factors affecting conception rate after the first artificial insemination in a private dairy cattle farm in North Algeria. *Vet World*. 2020; 13(12):2608-11. [DOI:10.14202/vetworld.2020.2608-2611] [PMID]
- [2] Çevik M, Selçuk M, Dogan S. Comparison of pregnancy rates after timed artificial insemination in Ovsynch, Heatsynch and CIDR-Based Synchronization Protocol in Dairy Cows. *Kafkas Univ Vet Fak Derg*. 2010; 16(1):85-9. [Link]
- [3] Mialot JP, Laumonnier G, Ponsart C, Fauxpoint H, Barasson E, Ponter AA, et al. Postpartum subestrus in dairy cows: Comparison of treatment with prostaglandin F_{2α} or GnRH+prostaglandin F_{2α} + GnRH. *Theriogenology*. 1999; 52(5):901-11. [DOI:10.1016/S0093-691X(99)00181-8] [PMID]
- [4] Grimard B, Humblot P, Ponter AA, Chastant S, Constant F, Mialot JP. Effectiveness of estrus synchronization treatments in cattle. *INRA Prod Anim*. 2003; 16(3):211-27. [DOI:10.20870/productions-animales.2003.16.3.3661]
- [5] Kouamo J, Toudjani HA, Le bale O. [Efficacy of two prostaglandin F_{2α}-based estrus synchronization methods in zebu (*Bos indicus*) Goudali (French)]. *Rev Elev Med Vet Pays Trop*. 2021; 74(3):153-60. [DOI:10.19182/remvt.36745]
- [6] Pursley JR, Wiltbank MC, Stevenson JS, Ottobre JS, Garverick HA, Anderson LL. Pregnancy rates per artificial insemination for cows and heifers inseminated at a synchronized ovulation or synchronized estrus. *J Dairy Sci*. 1997; 80(2):295-300. [DOI:10.3168/jds.S0022-0302(97)75937-X] [PMID]
- [7] Noui A, Boucif A. Efficacy of intravaginal progesterone added to Ovsynch in Algerian cattle farms. *Livest Res Rural Dev*. 2020; 32:10. [Link]
- [8] Campanile G, Baruselli PS, Vecchio D, Prandi A, Neglia G, Carvalho NA, et al. Growth, metabolic status and ovarian function in buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) heifers fed a low energy or high energy diet. *Anim Reprod Sci*. 2010; 122(1-2):74-81. [DOI:10.1016/j.anireprosci.2010.07.005] [PMID]
- [9] Ennuyer M. [Follicular waves in cows: practical applications to reproductive control (French)]. *Point Vet*. 2000; 31(209). [Link]
- [10] Stevenson JS, Phatak AP. Rates of luteolysis and pregnancy in dairy cows after treatment with cloprostenol or dinoprost. *Theriogenology*. 2010; 73(8):1127-38. [DOI:10.1016/j.theriogenology.2010.01.014] [PMID]
- [11] Colazo MG, Mapletoft RJ. A review of current timed-AI (TAI) programs for beef and dairy cattle. *Can Vet J*. 2014; 55(8):772-80. [PMID]
- [12] Udin Z, Rahim FH, Yellita Y. Effect of Ovsynch and Co-synch on Follicle Size and Conception Rate Indifferent Postpartum of Simmental Cows. *Asian J Anim Vet Adv*. 2017; 12(2):115-22. [DOI:10.3923/ajava.2017.115.122]
- [13] Raphalalani ZC, Nedambale TL, Nengovhela NB, Nephawe KA. An investigation of factors influencing synchronization response, conception and calving rate of communal cows in Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Appl Anim Husbandry Rural Dev*. 2020; 13:13-22. [Link]
- [14] Wolfenson D, Roth Z, Meidan R. Impaired reproduction in heat-stressed cattle: Basic and applied aspects. *Anim Reprod Sci*. 2000; 60-61:535-47. [DOI:10.1016/S0378-4320(00)00102-0] [PMID]
- [15] Stevenson JS, Kobayashi Y, Thompson KE. Reproductive performance of dairy cows in various programmed breeding systems including Ovsynch and combinations of Gonadotropin-releasing Hormone and prostaglandin F_{2α}. *J Dairy Sci*. 1999; 82(3):506-15. [DOI:10.3168/jds.S0022-0302(99)75261-6] [PMID]
- [16] Cartmill JA, El-Zarkouny SZ, Hensley BA, Lamb GC, Stevenson JS. Stage of cycle, incidence, and timing of ovulation, and pregnancy rates in dairy cattle after three timed breeding protocols. *J Dairy Sci*. 2001; 84(5):1051-9. [DOI:10.3168/jds.S0022-0302(01)74565-1] [PMID]
- [17] Caraba IV, Velicevici S. Using ovsynch protocol versus cosynch protocol in dairy cows. *Anim Sci Biotechnol*. 2013; 46(2):63-5. [Link]
- [18] Kasimanickam R, Hall JB, Currin JF, Whittier WD. Sire effect on the pregnancy outcome in beef cows synchronized with progesterone based Ovsynch and Co-synch protocols. *Anim Reprod Sci*. 2008; 104(1):1-8. [DOI:10.1016/j.anireprosci.2007.01.003] [PMID]
- [19] Dogruer G, Saribay MK, Karaca F, Ergun Y. The comparison of the pregnant rates obtained after the Ovsynch and double dose PGF_{2α}+GnRH applications in lactating dairy cows. *J Anim Vet Adv*. 2010; 9(4):809-13. [Link]
- [20] Kandiel MMM, Bassuoni LA, Sosa GA, Moustaf MA, Ghallab AM. Comparative Efficacy of Ovsynch and Heatsynch Protocols Assessed by Transrectal Ultrasonography and Serum Progesterone in Egyptian Buffalo Heifers. *Theriogenology Insight Int J Reprod Anim*. 2012; 2(3):173-83. [Link]
- [21] Vasconcelos JL, Silcox RW, Rosa GJ, Pursley JR, Wiltbank MC. Synchronization rate, size of the ovulatory follicle, and pregnancy rate after synchronization of ovulation beginning on different days of the estrous cycle in lactating dairy cows. *Theriogenology*. 1999; 52(6):1067-78. [DOI:10.1016/S0093-691X(99)00195-8] [PMID]
- [22] Moreira F, de la Sota RL, Diaz T, Thatcher WW. Effect of day of the estrous cycle at the initiation of a timed artificial insemination protocol on reproductive responses in dairy heifers. *J Anim Sci*. 2000; 78(6):1568-76. [DOI:10.2527/2000.7861568x] [PMID]
- [23] El-Zarkouny SZ. Conception rates for standing estrus and fixed-time insemination in dairy heifers synchronized with GnRH and PGF_{2α}. *Turk J Vet Anim Sci*. 2010; 34 (3):243-8. [DOI:10.3906/vet-0808-22]

- [24] Akbarabadi MA, Shabankareh HK, Abdolmohammadi A, Shahsavari MH. Effect of PGF2 α and GnRH on the reproductive performance of postpartum dairy cows subjected to synchronization of ovulation and timed artificial insemination during the warm or cold periods of the year. *Theriogenology*. 2014; 82(3):509-16. [DOI:10.1016/j.theriogenology.2014.05.005] [PMID]
- [25] Tenhagen BA, Kuchenbuch S, Heuwieser W. Timing of ovulation and fertility of heifers after synchronization of oestrus with GnRH and Prostaglandin F2 α . *Reprod Domest Anim*. 2005; 40(1):62-7. [DOI:10.1111/j.1439-0531.2004.00557.x] [PMID]
- [26] Alnimer MA, Alfataftah AA, Ababneh MM. A comparison of fertility with a cosynch protocol versus a modified ovsynch protocol which included estradiol in lactating dairy cows during the summer season in Jordan. *Anim Reprod*. 2011; 8(12):32-9. [Link]