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CARCASS DEVELOPMENT AND CELLULAR GROWTH  
OF  
MUSCLE AND FAT IN MALE AND FEMALE CATTLE

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## ABSTRACT

The influence of sex on muscle, fat and bone growth from birth to maturity was investigated by complete dissection of a half carcass of 18 female and 21 male Jersey cattle. In addition, the cellular growth of five muscles: *mm. rhomboideus*, *splenius*, *longissimus capitis*, *longissimus* and *semitendinosus*, and of three fat depots: subcutaneous, intermuscular and perirenal, was examined. Transverse sections of the five muscles were stained for myosin adenosine triphosphatase (ATPase) activity.

Muscle development, especially in the forequarter, is greater in males than in females. In males, the allometric growth of the neck muscles, *mm. rhomboideus*, *splenius* and *longissimus capitis*, relative to total muscle weight, was in two phases with two significantly different regression slopes, which describe the growth better than a single regression equation. The second phase had a significantly higher regression coefficient. In contrast, the growth of the neck muscles in females, and the growth of *mm. longissimus* and *semitendinosus* in both males and females, could be described satisfactorily by a single regression equation.

The transverse sectional area of whole muscle and the mean fibre area, which was determined in fresh frozen sections, enabled the estimation of total fibre number in each of the five muscles. Fibre number did not change significantly during growth. Males had about double the number of fibres in these neck muscles as compared with females; functional differences between sexes were reflected in the difference in number and the rate of increase in size of myosin ATPase high fibres.

These results support the concept that sexual dimorphism of overall muscle growth and muscle distribution in all species, is attributable to differences in prenatal development of fibre number, which determines the potential of a muscle to grow.

Differences in fat growth between sexes were due to the overall rate of fat deposition; the order of partitioning was in general

similar between sexes. The allometric growth of the three fat depots relative to total side fat shows that in both sexes, subcutaneous fat was the fastest growing, intermuscular was intermediate, and perirenal was slowest. Between sexes, the growth ratios of all three depots were higher in females than in males; a significant difference was observed for subcutaneous fat.

Determination of total lipid content of each depot, and lipid content of an adipocyte, allowed estimation of adipocyte number. Adipose tissue growth in all three depots of both sexes is characterised by a greater increase in the size of adipocytes than an increase in their number. However, the increase in size of adipocytes did not explain differences in the rate of fat growth between sexes and between depots. The rate of increase in adipocyte number was higher in females than in males for all three depots; the order of the rate of increase in number parallels the order of the growth ratios of the fat depots. Thus sex differences in the rate of fat growth can be attributed to differences in the rate of increase in the number of adipocytes.

Sex differences in bone weight distribution were small. In both sexes, there was a proximodistal gradient of decreasing growth in the limbs; craniocaudally, there was a fluctuating growth gradient in the vertebrae, and an increasing gradient in the ribs. Growth ratios of individual bones suggest a faster developing forequarter in males than in females; the forelimb may be more important for propulsion in males than in females.

External and internal pelvic measurements indicate differences in shape between sexes. From this model, it was suggested that problems of dystocia may arise when female adaptive changes in the vertical plane do not occur postnatally.

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# CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
	Fig 1 3
2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS	6
2.1 NUMBER OF CATTLE AND SOURCES OF ANIMALS	6
2.2 LINEAR MEASUREMENTS	6
2.3 SLAUGHTER PROCEDURE AND DIVISION OF THE CARCASS	6
2.4 CARCASS DISSECTION	8
2.4.1 DISSECTION OF SUBCUTANEOUS FAT	8
	Fig 2 9
2.4.1.1 <u>Forequarter subcutaneous fat</u>	9
2.4.1.2 <u>Hindquarter subcutaneous fat</u>	10
2.4.2 DISSECTION OF THE FOREQUARTER	11
2.4.3 DISSECTION OF THE HINDQUARTER	13
2.5 MUSCLE SAMPLES	14
2.5.1 POSITION OF MUSCLE SAMPLES	14
2.5.2 ENZYME HISTOCHEMISTRY	14
2.5.3 ESTIMATION OF MEAN FIBRE AREA	15
2.6 FAT SAMPLES	15
2.6.1 FAT SAMPLING SITES	15
2.6.2 FAT HISTOLOGY	15
2.6.3 ESTIMATION OF MEAN FAT CELL VOLUME	16
2.6.4 CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF FAT	16
2.7 ANALYSIS OF DATA	17
3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	19
3.1 CARCASS GROWTH	19
3.1.1 RESULTS	19
3.1.1.1 <u>Relative growth of fat, muscle and bone</u>	19
	Table 1 19
	Fig 3 20

		Page
3.1.1.2	Muscle:bone ratio	21
	Table 2	21
	Fig 4	22
3.1.2	DISCUSSION	22
3.1.2.1	<u>Environmental conditions</u>	22
3.1.2.2	<u>Influence of fat on sex differences</u>	23
3.1.2.3	<u>Growth changes in tissue proportions</u> <u>relative to TSMB</u>	24
3.1.2.4	<u>Muscle: bone ratio and maturity</u>	25
3.1.2.5	<u>Breed differences in muscle:bone ratio</u>	26
3.1.2.6	<u>Conclusions</u>	27
3.2	MUSCLE GROWTH	28
3.2.1	RESULTS	28
3.2.1.1	<u>Relative growth of muscle groups</u> <u>and individual muscles</u>	28
	Table 3	28
	Table 4	29
	Fig 5	31
	Fig 6	32
	Table 5	33
3.2.1.2	<u>Relative growth of the testis</u>	34
3.2.1.3	<u>Relative growth of <i>mm. rhomboideus</i>,</u> <u><i>splenius</i> and <i>longissimus capitis</i></u>	34
	Fig 7	35
	Table 6	35
	Figs 8, 9	36
	Fig 10, Table 7	37
3.2.1.4	<u>Relative growth of <i>mm. longissimus</i></u> <u>and <i>semitendinosus</i></u>	38
3.2.1.5	<u>Growth changes in measurements of</u> <u>muscle area relative to weight of</u> <u>muscle; estimation of fibre number</u>	38
	Figs 11, 12	39
	Table 8	40

		Page
3.2.2	DISCUSSION	44
	Table 9	44
	Fig 13	47
3.2.2.1	<u>Differences in the growth of muscle groups and individual muscles</u>	48
	Fig 14	48
	Fig 15	49
	Figs 16, 17	50
	Fig 18	51
	Fig 19	52
	Table 10	55
3.2.2.2	<u>Biological significance in the breaks in allometry of the testis and mm. rhomboideus, splenius and longissimus capitis</u>	57
	Fig 20	58
3.2.2.3	<u>Sources of variation in muscle growth studies</u>	59
3.2.2.4	<u>Change in area measurements relative to the weight of individual muscles</u>	60
	Table 11	61
	Fig 21	65
3.3	FAT GROWTH	67
3.3.1	RESULTS	67
3.3.1.1	<u>Relative growth of fat depots</u>	67
	Table 12	67
	Fig 22	68
	Table 13	69
	Table 14	70
3.3.1.2	<u>Subcutaneous and intermuscular fat in forequarter and hindquarter</u>	71
3.3.1.3	<u>Anatomical distribution of subcutaneous fat</u>	71



		Page
	Tables 15, 16	72
	Fig 23	73
3.3.1.4	<u>Distribution of intermuscular fat</u>	73
	Table 17	74
3.3.1.5	<u>Adipose tissue, lipid and adipocyte growth in three fat depots</u>	74
	Fig 24	75
	Fig 25	76
	Tables 18, 19	77
	Fig 26	78
	Table 20	79
	Fig 27	80
3.3.2	DISCUSSION	81
3.3.2.1	<u>Sources of error and assumptions</u>	81
3.3.2.2	<u>The partitioning and distribution of carcass fat</u>	83
3.3.2.3	<u>Subcutaneous fat distribution</u>	84
3.3.2.4	<u>Adipose tissue growth in male and female cattle</u>	85
	Fig 28	86
3.4	BONE GROWTH	90
3.4.1	RESULTS	90
3.4.1.1	<u>Relative growth of individual bones</u>	90
	Fig 29	90
	Table 21	91
	Table 22	93
3.4.1.2	<u>Change in linear measurements</u>	93
	Table 23	94
	Tables 24, 25	95
	Fig 30	96
3.4.2	DISCUSSION	97
3.4.2.1	<u>Growth patterns and distribution of bones</u>	97

	Page
3.4.2.2 <u>Growth patterns for pelvic</u> <u>dimensions and other</u> <u>measurements</u>	99
4.0      GENERAL CONCLUSIONS	101
APPENDIX 1	102
APPENDIX 2	113
APPENDIX 3	114
APPENDIX 4	115
APPENDIX 5	122
REFERENCES	129