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DIAGNOSIS OF BOVINE CAMPYLOBACTERIOSIS

by

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ABSTRACT

Seven virgin heifers and two bulls, five and six years old respectively, were challenged with *Campylobacter fetus* subsp. *venerealis*, isolate FD15. The challenge dose consisted of approximately  $10^9$  organisms per ml of phosphate buffered saline (PBS)pH7.2.

Cervicovaginal mucus was collected from heifers beginning one week after exposure using the technique described by Hoerlein and Kramer.<sup>31</sup> These were cultured on a solid selective medium.<sup>14 23</sup> Of the seven heifers, two became infected as determined by consistent recovery of the organism from cervical mucus samples. Seventy-four samples from both heifers were cultured; eight samples from one heifer, D07, were discounted on the assumption that she overcame her infection. Of the sixty-six samples, forty-eight yielded the organism on culture, giving a recovery rate of 72.4%.

Preputial samples were collected from the two bulls by a pipette<sup>3</sup> using the technique described by Dufty.<sup>23</sup> These were cultured directly and following millipore filtration on a solid selective medium.<sup>14 23</sup> They were also examined by immunofluorescence using a similar technique to that of Dufty<sup>22</sup> and Schutte.<sup>65</sup> Of the thirty-two samples examined by both methods, twenty-six (81%) were positive on immunofluorescence examination, twenty-two (69%) were positive on culture, and twenty-seven (84%) were positive to both tests.

It is suggested that the techniques used for sample collection and examination by culture and immunofluorescence provide an effective method for herd diagnosis of the disease.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF PLATES	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I. A REVIEW OF BOVINE CAMPYLOBACTERIOSIS	
Introduction	3
Taxonomy	4
Differentiation	8
Morphology	10
Growth Characteristics	10
Campylobacteriosis in Cattle	11
Distribution	12
Epidemiology and Transmission	12
Pattern of Herd Infertility	13
Infection in Bulls	15
Infection in Females	16
Diagnosis of Campylobacteriosis	18
1. Bovine Preputial Samples	19
2. Bovine Vaginal Mucus Samples	29
Control and Treatment	32
CHAPTER II. MATERIALS AND METHODS	
Organism	35
Animals and Facilities	35
Sample Collection	37

Solid Selective Medium	45
Cervicovaginal Mucus Samples	45
Preputial Samples	46
Biochemical Tests	50
CHAPTER III. RESULTS	52
CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION	57
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS	65
REFERENCES	68

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
TABLE I : Classification of Campylobacter species	6
TABLE II: Differentiation of Campylobacter species	9
TABLE III: Comparison of immunofluorescence and culture for diagnosing Campylobacteriosis in the bull	26
TABLE IV : Duration of recovery of <i>C.fetus</i> subsp. <i>venerealis</i> from infected heifers	53
TABLE V : Cultural examination of vaginal mucus samples from infected heifers.	54
TABLE VI : Cultural and immunofluorescence examination of preputial samples from infected bulls	56

LIST OF PLATES

	Page
PLATE 1 : COLLECTION OF CERVICAL MUCUS SAMPLES	
a) Equipment	39
b) Restraint of heifer	39
c) Introducing equipment into vulva	40
d) Volume of mucus in pipette	40
e) Mucus sample	41
PLATE 2 : COLLECTION OF PREPUTIAL SAMPLES	
a) Equipment	42
b) Restraint of bull	42
c) Pipette into preputial cavity	43
d) Preputial sample	43
PLATE 3 : BACTERIOLOGY	
a) <i>C. fetus</i> subsp. <i>venerealis</i> colonies on solid selective medium	44
b) Comparison of degree of contamination on blood agar and solid selective medium.	44



## INTRODUCTION

Although the clinical signs associated with genital tract infection by *Campylobacter fetus* subsp. *venerealis* in cattle have been well documented, definitive diagnosis has been a difficult task. The major problems have been the organism's susceptibility to normal atmospheric levels of oxygen, its fastidious growth requirements, and overgrowth by contaminating organisms. Indeed, many of the early reports of diagnosis of the disease have been largely based on the detection of the organism by microscopy.

The attention of many workers in this field has been directed to overcoming these problems thereby increasing diagnostic efficiency. This has resulted in the development of better and more selective media for bacteriological culture, the use of microaerophilic conditions for culturing the organisms, the use of millipore filtration to reduce contamination, and the development of enrichment media to preserve the viability of the organism during transportation.

Diagnosis of the disease in bulls can now be efficiently carried out by cultural and immunofluorescence examinations of preputial samples, either singly or preferably in combination. Using this approach, diagnostic efficiency rates of over 90% have been achieved.<sup>11 22 64</sup>

Diagnosis of the disease in females is best carried out by cultural examinations of cervical and/or vaginal mucus samples collected from non-pregnant animals. Success rates of 78%,<sup>14</sup> 83%,<sup>37</sup> and 54%<sup>31</sup> have been achieved using this method. The use of the vaginal mucus agglutination (VMA) test is considered valuable for herd diagnosis.<sup>9</sup>

The objectives of the investigation reported in this thesis were to attempt to artificially infect virgin heifers and bulls with *C. fetus* subsp. *venerealis*, isolate FD15, to determine the duration of the infection in heifers as shown by recovery of the organism from cervical mucus, and to assess the diagnostic efficiency of cultural examination in the female and of cultural and immunofluorescence examination in the male.