

THE REPRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE OF SIMMENTAL CATTLE RAISED UNDER COLD CLIMATIC CONDITIONS OF EASTERN TURKEY

Feyzi UĞUR¹

Mete YANAR¹

Macit ÖZHAN¹

Naci TÜZEMEN¹

SUMMARY : Reproductive traits of Simmentals reared under harsh climatic conditions of eastern part of Turkey were investigated in this study. Least squares means with their standard errors for calving interval, age at first calving, gestation length, service period were obtained of 436.0 ± 32.6 days, 40.5 ± 3.4 months, 285.4 ± 1.2 days, 149.7 ± 49.8 days respectively. Average birth weights of male and female Simmental calves were 37.7 ± 0.86 and 35.9 ± 0.95 kg respectively. The rates of normal birth, twin birth, abortion and still-birth were calculated as 93 %, 2.1 %, 3.7 %, 3.2 % respectively.

Results of study indicates that there is need for a concentrated effort to improve some reproductive parameters of Simmentals such as the age at first calving, the calving interval.

DOĞU ANADOLU BÖLGESİNİN SOĞUK İKLİM ŞARTLARI ALTINDA YETİŞTİRİLEN SIMMENTAL SIĞIRLARIN DÖL VERİM ÖZELLİKLERİ

ÖZET : Bu çalışmada, Doğu Anadolu Bölgesinin sert iklim şartları altında yetiştirilen Simmental sığırlarının döl verim özellikleri incelenmiştir. Buzağılama aralığı, ilkinde buzağılama yaşı, gebelik süresi ve servis periyoduna ait en küçük kareler ortalamaları ve standart hataları sırasıyla 436.0 ± 32.6 gün, 40.5 ± 3.4 ay, 285.4 ± 1.2 gün, 149.7 ± 49.8 gün olarak bulunmuştur. Erkek ve dişi Simmental buzağuların ortalama doğum ağırlıkları sırasıyla 37.7 ± 0.86 ve 35.9 ± 0.95 kg olarak tesbit edilmiştir. Normal doğum, ikiz doğum, yavru atma ve ölü doğum oranları sırasıyla % 93.0, % 2.1, % 3.7 ve % 3.2 olarak tesbit edilmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları göstermiştir ki, Simmentallerin ilkinde buzağılama yaşı ve buzağılama aralığı gibi döl verimi parametreleri bakımından iyileştirilmesi için daha yoğun bir çabanın gösterilmesi gereklidir.

¹Atatürk University, Collage of Agriculture, Department of Animal Science, 25240- Erzurum, Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Various indigenous cattle breeds are raised on the different regions of Turkey. Approximately 13.7 percent of the cattle is reared in the eastern region of the country (Anonymous, 1989). Because of low beef and milk yield of indigenous breeds, various European cattle breeds have been imported to increase milk and beef production. Simmental is one of these breeds imported from Germany. In recent years, the breed was recommended to the farmers living in eastern part of Turkey and distributed to the farms via Rural Development Project supported by Turkish Government and World Bank.

The eastern region of Turkey has distinct geographical and climatic conditions from the rest of the country. In this region, altitude ranges from 1200 to 2000 meters. Several high plateaus are located among high mountains. Temperature in Winter sometimes drops to -20 °C and is generally below zero degree centigrade during 5-6 months (between November and April). It also snows a lot in this region. There is no published study that reveals the reproductive performance of Simmental cattle raised under the cold climatic conditions of Eastern Turkey. Because of the harsh environmental conditions of this region, performance characteristics of Simmental cattle needs to be investigated before they are brought to the region in large number.

The study was undertaken to evaluate the reproductive performance of Simmental cattle which have been raised in the research farm of Agricultural Collage at Atatürk University.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Material

In this research, the performance records of Simmental cattle were used. The Simmental herd in this research farm was first established by 12 pregnant heifers and 1 bull imported from Germany in 1971. The performance records of these animals have been collected since 1971.

Simmental cattle were housed in a barn between October and April. After the weather gets warm, animals were put in the open shed free stall barn for approximately 2 months. Then, cattle were moved into the pasture of the research farm where the herd grazed until October.

Lactating cows were fed 4-5 kg/head milk concentrates daily. Before the animals were moved into the pasture, heifers and cows were also offered dried hay and

wet sugar beet pulp. *Ad libitum* feeding of the dried hay was practiced. The quantity of wet sugar beet pulp offered to each animal ranged from 8 to 10 kg/head daily.

The birth season of calves was regulated by the adjusting date of matings so that the calves were not born in July and August. The young animals were reared in a particular buildings which contained individual pens for calves and delivery rooms for heavy pregnant cows. Calves were fed whole milk before weaning, then they were given calf starter and dried hay for 6 months.

Methods

The reproductive parameters studied included birth weight, calving interval, age at first calving, service period and gestation length. In addition, rates of still-birth, abortion, twin birth, normal birth were investigated. The data were analyzed by the method of fitting constants as described by Harvey (1972). Accordingly, several statistical models were used for evaluating the effect of various fixed environmental factors influencing the reproductive parameters. Comparisons among subclass means were carried out by the method of Duncan's multiple range test available in SAS program (SAS, 1985).

Statistical models used for analysis of variance were as follows :

For calving Interval,

$$Y_{ijkl} = \mu + a_i + b_j + c_k + d_l + e_{ijkl}$$

For age at first calving,

$$Y_{ijkl} = \mu + a_i + b_j + e_{ij}$$

For service period,

$$Y_{ikl} = \mu + a_i + c_k + d_l + e_{ikl}$$

For gestation length and birth weight,

$$Y_{ijkl} = \mu + a_i + b_j + c_k + e_{ijk}$$

Where, Y represented calving interval, age at first calving, gestation length or birth weight. μ was the least squares means. a, b, c and d corresponded the effect of year of calving, sex of calf, age of cow and season of calving respectively. The random error in the mathematical model was indicated by e.

Years of calving were grouped into 6 periods, each consisting of 3 consecutive years assuming that managerial and genetic changes would be small during this period. Also, the ages of cows were grouped into 6 periods, each including eleven consecutive months.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Calving Intervals

Least squares means with their standard errors for factors influencing calving interval of Simmental cattle reared in Eastern Turkey are presented in Table 1. The effects of sex of calf, age of cow and season of calving on the calving interval were not significant ($P > 0.05$). However, year of calving had significant ($P < 0.05$) influence on the calving interval.

An average for calving interval was found as 436.0 ± 32.6 days. The result was in agreement with findings of studies conducted by Alpan et al. (1976) and İslan et al. (1978) who reported that the calving intervals of Simmentals in Turkey were 456 and 439 days respectively. In other countries, Trautman (1973) obtained an average calving interval of 423 days for Simmental in Poland, while Hincrichsen and Konold (1980) reported 366.7 days for the same breed in Germany. The same parameter determined from Simmental cattle reared in Austria and Paraguay were found as 407 and 377 days by Panic et al. (1985), and Talavera (1987) respectively. The average calving interval values determined in other countries were fairly shorter than our finding.

Values in Table 1. indicates an important variation among the years. The result demonstrated that the factors affecting calving interval were not adequately controlled at this farm.

The result relating to the effect of age on the calving interval were in agreement with findings of Martinez and Hernandez (1984) who reported that mature cows had shorter calving interval than young cows.

Age at First Calving

The least squares means with their standard errors and test of significance for factors effecting the age at first calving are given in Table 1. An average age at first calving was obtained of 40.5 ± 3.4 months and longer than the findings of many other researchers (Hocke, 1980; Husd jursskötsel, 1988; Ruegsegger, 1989). Their results relating to this parameter for Simmentals reared in Spain, Sweden and Switzerland were

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28.2, 27.4 and 33.2 months respectively.

The effect of years on the age at first calving was highly significant ($P < 0.01$). However, season of calving have no significant ($P > 0.05$) effect on this parameter (Table 1).

The findings of this study indicates that concentrated effort is needed to reduce the age of first calving of Simmentals in this farm. Greater attention to improve nutrition and management practices would be helpful to reduce the age at first calving.

Gestation Length

Data belonging to gestation length of Simmental reared under cold climatic condition of Eastern Turkey were classified as year, sex of calf, age of cow (Table 1). The average gestation length was 285 ± 1.2 days. The result was in agreement with the findings of several other studies (Klaslan et al., 1978, and Tümer et al., 1985). The researchers reported that gestation lengths of Simmentals reared in different regions of Turkey were 285.6, and 287.5 days respectively. Similar results, 284.3 and 286.8 days, were obtained by Wray et al., (1987) in USA, and Muresan et al. (1979) in Romania.

Years significantly ($P < 0.05$) affected gestation length, but the effects of sex of calf and age of cow on the same parameters were not significant ($P > 0.05$) (Table 1).

Birth Weight

The least squares means with their standard errors and test of significance for factors influencing the birth weight of Simmental are shown in Table 2. The average birth weight of male and female calves were 37.7 ± 0.86 and 35.9 ± 0.95 kg. The birth weight of Simmental born in Romania, Sweden and Bulgaria were reported as 40.3, 46.0, 34.0 kg respectively (Muresan et al. 1979; Husdjursskötsel, 1988; Ivanov, 1982). In Turkey, Alpan et al (1976), Tümer et al. (1985) and Yanar et al. (1993) reported that the birth weight of male and female calves were 36.0 and 35.0 kg; 40.4 and 37.1 kg; 41.3 and 34.5 kg respectively.

The age of cow had significant ($P < 0.05$) effect on the birth weight as expected. The birth weight of calves gradually increased with increasing age of cow. The heaviest birth weight was obtained from calves of cows whose ages were ranged form 85 to 96 months. After this age period, the birth weight declined (Table 2). The result was supported by Cunningham et al. (1987) and Burfening et al. (1988).

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Table 3. Rates of Normal Birth, Abortion, Still-Birth, and Twin Birth of Simmental Cattle

Yeears	Number of Pregnant Cows	Normal Birth		Abortion		Still Birth		Twin Birth	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1971	12	12	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1972	12	11	91.6	1	8.3	-	-	-	-
1973	10	10	100	-	-	-	-	1	10
1974	12	11	91.6	-	-	1	8.3	-	-
1975	7	7	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1976	11	9	81.8	1	9.1	1	10	-	-
1977	2	2	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1978	9	8	88.8	1	11.1	-	-	-	-
1979	7	6	85.7	-	-	1	14.3	-	-
1980	6	5	83.3	-	-	1	16.7	-	-
1981	7	6	85.7	1	14.3	-	-	-	-
1982	8	8	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1983	10	9	90	1	10	-	-	-	-
1984	5	5	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1985	10	10	100	-	-	-	-	1	10
1986	7	7	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1987	8	6	75	2	25	-	-	-	-
1988	6	6	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1989	8	8	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
1990	5	5	100	-	-	-	-	1	20
1991	11	11	100	-	-	-	-	1	9
1992	9	7	77	-	-	2	22	-	-
1993	5	5	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	187	174	93.0	7	3.7	6	3.2	4	2.1

Service Period

The average service period of Simmental cows reared in this farm were determined as 149.7 ± 49.8 days. The results was longer than findings of other incestigators (Stanciu et al. 1982; Tümer et al. 1985; and Ilaslan et al. 1978). The data belonging to the service period were not significantly ($P > 0.05$) influenced by age of cow and season of calving. However, years significantly ($P < 0.05$) affected the service period.

Birth Rates

The data concerning birth rates are tabulated in Table 3. The rates of normal birth, twin birth, abortion and still-birth were 93 %, 2.1 %, 3.7 %, 3.2 % respectively. The normal birth rates of Simmental cattle in Germany and Turkey were found as 98 % by Golze and Scwark, (1988) and 88 % by Alpan et al. (1976).

The results related to the twin birth rates were in agreement with the findings of Tümer et al. (1985) who reported that rates of abortion and still-birth were 0 % and 2.5 % respectively. The still-birth rates of Simmentals reared in Germany and Switzerland were reported as 1.6 % by Golze and Scwark, (1988) and 2.6 % by Hagger and Hofer (1989).

The findings of the present study revealed that the rates of still-birth and abortion were fairly greater than the results of other studies.

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