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Molecular studies on some genes related to seasonal reproductive variation in sheep

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Abstract

This study was carried out for detection of polymorphisms in melatonin receptor 1A (MTNR1A) and Arylalkylamine N acetyltransferase (AA-NAT) genes and their association with reproductive traits. Blood samples of 126 Animal from three Egyptian sheep breeds were collected. DNA was extracted and subjected to PCR-RFLP using RsaI and SmaI enzymes. Two alleles (C and T), three genotypes (CC, CT and TT) for MTNR1A gene also (A and G), (GG, GA, and AA) for AA-NAT gene were detected. Alleles C and A, genotypes CT and GA showed the highest frequency for MTNR1A and AA-NAT genes respectively. Association analysis of MTNR1A SNP revealed a significant association in Ossimi and Rhmani breeds with age of first lambing and C allele seems to be the favorable allele. Results for AA-NAT SNP demonstrate significant differences in Ossimi with age of first lambing and litter size and in Rhmani with lambing interval and Quite discrepancy were observed for the favorable allele. Concerning to first conception season the study revealed that ewes carrying CT genotype of MTNR1A gene and conceive in UF season exhibited significantly the lowest age of first lambing and TT ewes conceived in LF have the highest litter size. Also, ewes carrying GG genotype of AA-NAT gene and conceive in EF or UF seasons exhibited significantly the lowest age of first lambing. Regarding lambing season TT ewes of MTNR1A SNP with lambing period in LF season and GG ewes of AA-NAT SNP with lambing period in UF season have significantly the lowest lambing interval. According to personal knowledge this is the first study concerned with this association in Egyptian sheep breed. In conclusion: the polymorphisms achieved in this study could be measured as genetic markers suitable for improving reproductive efficiency during unfavorable season and the obtained desirable genotypes could be taken into account in new genetic selective schemes.

Keywords: (MTNR1A, AA-NAT, Egyptian sheep, polymorphism, Reproductive seasonality, PCR-RFLP).

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother Wafaa who have always been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of my whole life, my father Ali, my Sister Asmaa and my brother Mohamed whom I'm truly grateful for having them in my life. This work is also dedicated to my lovely husband Khaled, who have always loved me unconditionally and encourage me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve and to my little pretty angle Dai the smile that lightens my way.

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Contents

	Page
1- INTRODUCTION.....	1
2-REVIEW of LITERATURE.....	4
2.1. sheep.....	4
2.2. Seasonal Reproduction.....	8
2.3. Genetic Selection.....	15
2.4. Reproductive Performance Traits.....	20
2.4. Melatonin Hormone.....	21
2.5. Melatonin receptors and MTNR1A gene.....	25
2.6. Arylalkylamine N-Acetyltransferase enzyme.....	28
2.7. Arylalkylamine N-Acetyltransferase gene (AA-NAT gene).....	30
3. MATERIAL and METHODS.....	33
3.1. MATERIALS.....	33
3.1.1 Animal samples and data.....	33
3.1.2 Ethical Approval.....	34
3.2 Methods.....	34
3.2.1. Polymorphisms of MTNR1A and AANAT gene of Egyptian sheep breed....	34
3.2.1.1. DNA Extraction from blood samples.....	34
3.2.1.2. Assessment of DNA purity and quantity.....	36
3.2.1.3. PCR amplification of MTNR1A and AA-NAT genes fragments.....	37
3.2.1.4. Agarose gel electrophoresis.....	40

3.2.1.5. RFLP (Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism).....	44
3.2.2. Statistical analysis.....	47
3.2.2.1. Calculation of genotypic and allelic frequencies and evaluation of Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium (HWE).....	47
3.2.2.2. Calculation of unbiased expected heterozygosity (UHe) and number Of effective allele (Ne) as estimator of genetic diversity.....	48
3.2.2.3. Determination of the association between the different genotypes in each studied gene locus with some fertility traits.....	48
3.2.2.4. Determination of the association between the different genotypes in each studied gene locus with some fertility traits in different first conception and lambing seasons.....	49
4. RESULTS.....	51
5. DISCUSSION.....	80
SUMMARY.....	103
REFERENCES.....	106
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	131
ARABIC SUMMARY	

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table (3.1): Primers used for the specific amplification of specific loci of MTNR1A and AANAT genes and their annealing temperatures and product sizes.....	38
Table (3.2): Schematic representation of genotyping of sheep MTNR1A gene by RsaI enzyme.....	45
Table (3.3): Schematic representation of genotyping of sheep AA-NAT gene by SmaI enzyme.....	45
Table (4.1): Frequency of genotypes and alleles for MTNR1A gene locus for different Egyptian sheep breeds on base of RFLP.....	54
Table (4.2): Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene on ewe reproductive traits in Egyptian sheep breeds.....	57
Table (4.3): Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with first conception season on reproductive traits.....	60
Table (4.4): Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with season of lambing on reproductive traits.....	63
Table (4.5): Frequency of genotypes and alleles for AA-NAT gene locus for different Egyptian sheep breeds on base of RFLP.....	68
Table (4.6): Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene on reproductive traits in Egyptian sheep breeds.....	71
Table (4.7): Effect of SNP of AA -NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with first conception season on reproductive traits.....	74
Table (4.8): Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with season of lambing on reproductive traits.....	77

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure (2.1) : Chart of the Egyptian sheep population during the period from 1961-2016 according to (FAOSTAT) online services.....	7
Figure (2.2) : A neuronal pathway regulating pineal melatonin synthesis.....	14
Figure (2.3) : Schematic representation of MTNR1A gene.....	27
Figure (2.4) : The synthesis of melatonin from serotonin, where in AANAT is the penultimate enzyme in the pathway.....	28
Figure (2.5) : Schematic representation of AA-NAT gene.....	32
Figure (4.1) : Genomic extracted DNA from sheep blood samples by using commercial DNA extraction kit.....	51
Figure (4.2) : Successfully amplified exon II region of MTNR1A gene using specific primer giving rise to an amplicon of 824 bp.....	52
Figure (4.3) : Different digestion pattern by Rsa I enzyme for sheep MTNR1A in the three Egyptian breeds.....	53
Figure (4.4A) : Genotypic distribution of RsaI enzyme Locus of MTNR1A gene in investigated Egyptian sheep populations.....	55
Figure (4.4B) : Allelic distribution of RsaI enzyme Locus of MTNR1A gene in investigated Egyptian sheep breeds.....	55
Figure (4.4C) : Allele Frequencies at MTNR1A RsaI Locus with Graphs by breed.....	56
Figure (4.5) : Patterns of allelic richness and heterozygosity of Ovine MTNR1A across three Egyptian sheep breeds.....	56
Figure (4.6A) : The association between detected MTNR1A genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and age at first lambing.....	58
Figure (4.6B) : The association between detected MTNR1A genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and lambing interval.....	58

	Page
Figure (4.6C) : The association between detected MTNR1A genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and litter size.....	59
Figure (4.6D) : The association between detected MTNR1A genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and fertility.....	59
Figure (4.7A) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on age of first lambing.....	61
Figure (4.7B) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on lambing interval	61
Figure (4.7C) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on litter size.....	62
Figure (4.7D) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on fertility.....	62
Figure (4.8A) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on age of first lambing.....	64
Figure (4.8B) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on lambing interval.....	64
Figure (4.8C) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on litter size.....	65
Figure (4.8D) : Effect of SNP of MTNR1A gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on fertility.....	65
Figure (4.9) : Successfully amplified AA-NAT gene by using specific primer giving rise to an amplicon of 1142 bp	66
Figure (4.10) : Different digestion pattern by SmaI enzyme for sheep AA-NAT in the three Egyptian sheep breeds	67

	Page
Figure (4.11A) : Genotypic distribution of Sma I enzyme Locus of AA-NAT gene in the investigated Egyptian sheep breeds	69
Figure (4.11B) : Allelic distribution of Sma I enzyme Locus of AA-NAT gene in investigated Egyptian sheep breed.....	69
Figure (4.11C) : Allele Frequencies at AA-NAT Sma I Locus Graphs by breed.....	70
Figure (4.12) : show patterns of allelic richness and heterozygosity of Ovine AA-NAT across three Egyptian sheep breeds.....	70
Figure (4.13A) : shows the association between detected AA-NAT genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and age at first lambing.....	72
Figure (4.13B) : shows the association between detected AA-NAT genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and lambing interval	72
Figure (4.13C) : shows the association between detected AA-NAT genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and litter size.....	73
Figure (4.13D) : shows the association between detected AA-NAT genotypes in Egyptian sheep breeds and fertility.....	73
Figure (4.14A) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on age of first lambing.....	75
Figure (4.14B) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on lambing interval	75
Figure (4.14C) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on litter size.....	76
Figure (4.14D) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different first conception seasons on fertility.....	76

	Page
Figure (4.15A) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on age of first lambing	78
Figure (4.15B) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on lambing interval	78
Figure (4.15C) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on litter size.....	79
Figure (4.15D) : Effect of SNP of AA-NAT gene in Egyptian sheep breeds with different lambing seasons on fertility.....	79

INTRODUCTION

Sheep is considered as an important farm animal and contribute significantly to livelihood of a human population. They are multipurpose animal, have lower feed requirement, shorter generation intervals, small size, and are better able to utilize a wide range of feedstuffs (**Devendra, 2002 and Morris, 2009**). Rahmani, Ossimi, and Barki, are of the main sheep breeds in Egypt. They are raised mainly for meat with carpet wool as a secondary product and milk is of very minor importance (**Galal *et al.*, 2005**).

Sheep are widely known as an animal with marked seasonality of breeding activity (**Rosa and Bryant 2003**). The photoperiod drives their reproductive cycle, which comprises a season of high sexual activity during short days and an anestrus season that occurs during long days (**Saxena *et al.*, 2015**)^a.

Seasonal variation in fertility is a major obstacle to increase the intensity of sheep production. Satisfactory reproductive performance is mainly limited by the need to lengthen the breeding season to encompass unfavorable breeding seasons. The identification of quantitative trait loci (QTL) and the implementation of marker-assisted selection could assist in selection schemes to shorten the seasonal anestrus and improve reproductive performance (**Notter and Cockett, 2005**).