The allele and genotype frequencies of bovine pituitary-specific transcription factor and leptin genes in Iranian cattle and buffalo populations using PCR-RFLP

Arash Javanmard¹, Nader Asadzadeh²*, Mohammad Hossein Banabazi³ and Javad Tavakolian³

¹Department of Genomics, West and North-West Agriculture Biotechnology Research Institute(ABRII-T), Tabriz, I.R. Iran ²Department of Animal Production and Management, Animal Science Research Institute of Iran (ASRI), Karaj, I.R. Iran ³Department of Biotechnology, Animal Science Research Institute of Iran (ASRI), Karaj, I.R. Iran

Abstract
The use of polymorphic markers in breeding programmes could make selection more accurate and efficient. A total of 324 individuals from six Iranian cattle populations (Sarabi, Golpayegani, Sistani, Taleshi, Mazandarani, Dashtiyari), F₁ Golpayegani × Brown Swiss and Iranian buffalo populations were genotyped for the Pit-1 HinfI and leptin Sau3AI polymorphisms by the polymerase chain reaction and restriction fragment length polymorphism (PCR-RFLP). The genotype and gene frequencies for each breed were determined and shown to be quite variable among the breeds. The highest frequencies of allele B for the leptin gene and allele A for the Pit-1 gene were found in Dashtiyari and Sistani cattle, respectively. According to our results, the highest AB genotype frequencies were found in the Taleshi and F₁ Golpayegani x Brown Swiss cross for the leptin and Pit-1 genes, respectively. These allele frequencies were comparable to previously published data on exotic breeds. The highest and lowest heterozygosities were found in Taleshi and Dashtiyari cattle for the leptin gene and in F₁ Golpayegani x Brown Swiss cross and Sistani cattle for the Pit-1 gene, respectively. These values indicated the presence of low variation for these genes in the studied populations. The possible association between molecular polymorphisms within these candidate genes and economic traits for the studied populations should be further investigated.

Keywords: Pit-1; Leptin; Iranian cattle; buffalo; PCR-RFLP; Polymorphism.

INTRODUCTION
Pit-1 gene has been identified as the pituitary specific transcription factor that regulates the expression of the growth hormone (GH) and prolactin (PRL) genes in the anterior pituitary (Tuggle et al., 1993). Renaville et al. (1997) showed that the A allele (especially the AB genotype) may have an effect on milk yield and its components. Leptin is a 16 KDa protein synthesized by adipose tissue (Ito, 1998) and it is involved in the regulation of feed intake (Lagonigro et al., 2003), energy balance, fertility and immune function (Liefers et al., 2002). Leptin gene consists of three exons and two introns. Liefers et al. (2002) reported that heifers with the Sau3AI-AB genotype produce 1.32 kg/d more milk and consume 0.73 kg/d more compared to those with the AA genotype. They also suggested that the B allele may have a role in improving milk production without negative energy balance and low fertility. Buchanan et al. (2003) reported that the T allele of the bovine leptin gene resulted in the production of more milk and higher somatic cell count but did not have a significant effect on milk fat or protein during lactation. Lagonigro et al. (2003) reported an association between five single nucleotide polymorphisms within the leptin gene and feed intake as well as fat traits. Almedia et al. (2003) found two alleles responsible for increasing the calving interval, thus, they suggested selection against these carriers could improve calving interval at least 2 months.

So far there are no reports on the study of these genes in Iranian cattle and buffalo populations (Bos...
indicus). This study intends to identify the Pit-1-Hinf\textsubscript{I} and leptin-Sau3AI polymorphisms and estimate allelic and genotypic frequencies and heterozygosities (as inter-population variation measurement) in six Iranian cattle populations, F\textsubscript{1} Golpayegani × Brown Swiss crosses and Iranian buffalo population. The data obtained from this research will also be compared with the results of similar studies carried out on exotic cattle and buffalo breeds.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Samples and Bleeding Locations: A total of 324 individuals were used in this study. Whole blood samples were collected from the following populations: Sarabi (n=82), Golpayegani (n=57), Sistani (n=38), Taleshi (n=70), Mazandarani (n=26), Dashiyari (n=8), F\textsubscript{1} offspring of Golpayegani × Brown Swiss crosses (n=13) and Iranian buffalo (n=30). The samples were randomly obtained from Shabestar, Sarab, Uremia (Jabal), Delijan, Golpayegani, Zehak, Talesh and Mazandaran Jahad-e-Keshavarzi animal breeding stations.

DNA Extraction: DNA extraction was carried out by the method of Boom et al. (1989) as follows: Briefly, to an aliquot of 100 µl blood (after thawing), 400 µl of lysis buffer (Guandin Thiocyanate, 20 mM; EDTA, 20 mM; Tris-HCl, 10 mM; Triton X\textsubscript{100}, 40 g/l; DTT, 10 g/l) was added, the mixture was vortexed and incubated at 65°C for 5 min. The cells were resuspended in 20 µl of nuclease solution (Silica gel: 4g, Guanidine Thiocyanate, 20 mM; EDTA, 20 mM; Tris-HCl, 10 mM; KCl, 1M and EDTA, 20 mM), the mixture was vortexed and then spun for 10 sec at 5,000 ×g. The pellet was resuspended in 200 µl of lysis buffer again. The suspended white blood cell suspension was then added to 400 µl of saline buffer (NaCl, 1M; Tris-HCl, 10 mM; KCl, 1M and EDTA, 20 mM), the mixture was vortexed and then spun for 10 sec at 5,000 ×g. The DNA was precipitated with 45-55 µl of extra gene solution (Ion Exchange Resin): 10%. Orange G color: 0.02%, Triton X\textsubscript{100}, 0.01%) and was incubated in 65°C for 3-5 min. Then protein was precipitated by centrifugation (3 min at 1000 ×g) and the upper layer containing the DNA was transferred to another tube. The relative purity of DNA was determined using a spectrophotometer based on absorbances at 260 and 280 nm, respectively.

PCR–RFLP Analysis: The sequences of the forward and reverse primers for the amplification of the Pit-1 gene were:

\begin{align*}
\text{PitF} & : 5\text{`-TGGAGTGCTTGTATTTCTTCTTCT-3'} \\
\text{PitR} & : 5\text{`-AAATGTCAATGTGCCCTTCTGA-3'}
\end{align*}

The polymerase chain reaction for the Pit-1 gene was performed in a 25 µl reaction mixture, containing 1.5 mM MgCl\textsubscript{2}, 200 µM of each dNTPs, 0.3 µM of each primers, 1X PCR buffer, 1U Taq polymerase (Cinagen, Iran) and 100 ng of genomic DNA template. The reaction mixture was placed in a DNA thermal cycler (Perkin Elmer 9700). Thermal cycling conditions included: an initial denaturation step at 95°C for 2 min followed by 30 cycles of 95°C for 45 sec, 60°C for 1 min, 72°C for 1 min and a final extension at 72°C for 3 min. The PCR products were digested with 10 U of Hinf\textsubscript{I} (Gibco BRL, life Technologies, USA) at 37°C for at least 14h.

One part of second intron of leptin gene was amplified using the following primers:

\begin{align*}
\text{LePF:} & \text{ 5`-TGAGGTTGTGTATTTCTTCTTCTTCT-3'} \\
\text{LePR:} & \text{ 5`-GTCCCCTGTCTGACTACGTAACT-3'}
\end{align*}

PCR reaction was performed using 0.5 U Taq polymerase and 50 ng of DNA. Thermal cycling conditions were as follows; initial denaturation at 94°C for 2 min, followed by 35 cycles of 94°C, 55°C and 72°C (each for 1 min) and a final extension at 72°C for 15 min. PCR products were digested overnight at 37°C with 10 U of Sau3AI (Roche, Germany). Restriction fragments from the above PCR reactions were electrohoresed on 2% agarose gels and stained with ethidium bromide.

Statistical analysis: The allele and genotype frequencies were estimated by direct counting. The heterozygosities (as gene variation indicates) were calculated using the POPGENE software version 1.31 (Yeh et al., 1999), according to Nei procedure (1978).

RESULTS

One RFLP in the bovine leptin and Pit-1 genes was detected. There was one polymorphic Hinf\textsubscript{I} site in the 600 bp PCR product within exon 6 of Pit-1 gene. The digested AA PCR product exhibited one fragment of 600 bp and for the BB PCR product, the 600 bp fragment was cleaved into two fragments of 357 and 243 bp. Figure 1 shows the restriction pattern of three genotypes AA, AB and BB upon digestion of the Pit-1 Hinf\textsubscript{I} site revealed a mutation at position 1256. The mutation was a G to A transition. The 442bp fragment of the leptin gene also contained two restriction sites of Sau3AI. AB PCR product was cleaved into three fragments of 303, 88 and 32 bp (bands not detected on the gel). Sequence analysis of Sau3AI site in the leptin gene revealed a mutation at position 1180 that was a C to T.
transition. Figure 2 shows the restriction pattern of three genotypes of the leptin gene. Allele and genotype frequencies and the average heterozygosity in six Iranian cattle, F1 Golpayegani × Brown Swiss crosses and buffalo populations for Pit-1 and leptin loci were analyzed (Table 1 and 2). Although the B allele is favorable for the leptin gene (Pomp et al., 1997 and Almedia et al., 2003) and A allele for the Pit-1 gene (Sabour et al., 1996; AB genotype is preferred by both the candidate genes (Woolard et al., 1994; Renaville et al., 1997; Pomp et al., 1997 and Almedia et al., 2003). The highest B allele frequency was estimated in Dashtiyari cattle for the leptin gene (0.875) and A allele in Sistani cattle (0.9211) for the Pit-1 gene. However, the highest AB genotype frequency was found in Taleshi and F1 Golpayegani × Brown Swiss for the leptin and Pit-1 genes, respectively.

The heterozygosity was varied from 0.2188 to 0.4991 for the leptin gene in Dashtiyani and Taleshi cattle and from 0.1454 to 0.4734 for the Pit-1 gene in Sistani cattle and F1 Golpayegani × Brown Swiss cross, respectively.

**DISCUSSION**

A main goal of the animal breeder is to select superior animals for breeding. Screening favorable alleles for selection at the DNA level provides an ideal tool for marker-assisted selection. RFLP polymorphism within the bovine Pit-1 gene was first detected with HinfI nuclease by Woolard et al. (1994). Sabour et al. (1996) showed that allele A in Pit-1 locus positively affected milk production traits in Friesian cattle. This allele (frequency of 0.18) showed a significant superiority over allele B for milk and milk protein yields and body conformation traits within Italian Holstein Friesian cattle.

The allele and genotype frequencies are variable among different studied populations and also the favorable allele and genotype frequencies in Iranian populations (Bos indicus) were comparable to published results, especially on Bos taurus. The Pit-1 A allele frequencies have been estimated to be 0.45 in Angus; 0.26 in Holstein; 0.21 in Herford; 0.28 in Gelbvieh; 0.1 in Brahman; 0.25 in Polish and 0.95 in Gry cattle (Zwierzchowski et al., 2001). Pomp et al.
(1997) have reported leptin B allele frequencies of 0.3 in Limousine; 0.21 in Simmental; 0.28 in Gelbvieh; 0.29 in Holstein; 0.5 in Hereford, 0.27 in Angus, 1.0 in Brahman and 0.4 in Brangus. Therefore, breeding strategies could be designed for introgression of the A allele for \( \text{Pit-1} \) and B allele for leptin from Iranian populations to exotic breeds such as Holstein.

A heterozygosity of less than 0.5 indicated low variation for these genes in studied populations. It is suggested that the strategies such as migration, introduction of new diversity and crossbreeding for increasing gene diversity and its conservation besides exploration of this potential genetic diversity should be adapted. Although the allele frequency of B is high for some Iranian populations, the AB genotype (favorable genotype) frequency is not too high. Therefore, it is suggested that crossbreeding should be done between these populations and/or with exotic breeds to increase the frequency of the favorable genotype. For example, crossing of the Golpayegani with the Brown Swiss stock has increased both B allele and AB genotype frequencies in \( F_1 \) generation.

In conclusion, the possible association between molecular polymorphisms within these candidate genes and economic traits for the studied populations should be further investigated.

Acknowledgments

We thank Dr. Silvia C. Liefere from the Institute of Leystand, Holland and Dr. Fiona C. Buchanan from Saskatchewan University, Canada and Dr. Ilias Kappas from Thessaloniki University, Greece for their excellent comments on our manuscript. We also thank the Iranian cattle breeding stations for their collaboration in sampling procedure. This work was completely funded by East Azarbyjan Management and Programming Center for Scientific Research and Technology Application.

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