

Methods of diagnosis and treatment of postpartum uterine infection adopted by Algerian veterinarians

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Abstract: The present study aimed to monitor the practices of Algerian veterinarians in the diagnosis and treatment of puerperal metritis (PM) and clinical endometritis (CE) in cattle. For this purpose, a questionnaire was established and distributed to collect the information concerning veterinarian profiles and practices related to the diagnosis and treatment of PM and CE. The results showed that examinations of the uterus (rectal palpation), vaginal discharge, and rectal temperature were the most practiced methods for PM (71%, 68%, and 83%, respectively) and CE (86%, 60%, and 65%, respectively) diagnosis. Tetracycline was the antibiotic of choice for intrauterine treatment of PM (54%) and CE (57%), whereas penicillin was the preferred parenteral antibiotic against PM (68%) and CE (64%). In addition, molecules combined with antibiotic treatment were PGF_{2α} (PM: 71%, CE: 79%), vitamins (PM: 73%, CE: 60.5%), and nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (PM: 68.2%, CE: 58%). Inseminators were more likely to use IU cephalosporins to treat PM and CE (OR = 3.5, P < 0.05 and OR = 5.1, P < 0.01, respectively). Veterinarians with more than 10 years of experience were more likely to use IU cephalosporins to treat PM (OR = 3.8, P = 0.03). Moreover, bovine practitioners were less likely to observe hyperthermia in cases of CE (OR = 0.29, P = 0.02).

Key words: Puerperal metritis, clinical endometritis, survey

1. Introduction

Postpartum uterine infections (PPUIs) are considered as one of the main pathologies causing infertility of the cow and its culling [1–5]. They are the outcome of the combination of a determining factor, pathogens (bacteria), and predisposing factors (e.g., retained placenta and hypocalcemia) [6,7].

Clinically, PPUIs were divided into four forms [8]. First, puerperal metritis (PM), with a prevalence of 15%–20% [9], occurs within 21 days postpartum and can be diagnosed based on an abnormal distension of the uterus combined with a fetid watery red-brown uterine discharge and systemic symptoms. When the systemic symptoms are absent, this form of PPUI is called clinical metritis [8]. Second, clinical endometritis (CE) is observed more than 21 days postpartum and can be diagnosed by the presence in the vagina of mucopurulent or purulent uterine discharge [8,10], with a prevalence between 5% and 26% [11]. Third, subclinical endometritis is characterized by the absence of clinical symptoms, cytology analyses being

the only tool for its diagnosis [8]. Fourth, pyometra, a rare condition comprising fewer than 5% of cases of PPUI [7], is defined by the accumulation of purulent material within the uterine lumen with a closed cervix [8]. With a high prevalence, the possibility of clinical diagnosis, and important economic losses, PM and CE are the PPUIs most often confronted and treated by veterinarians in the field.

A large variety of therapeutic agents have been proposed for the treatment of PM and CE. These treatments are based on the intrauterine administration of antibiotics (tetracycline, cephalosporins) [12,13] and antiseptics (iodine solutions) [14] and the parenteral administration of antibiotics (penicillin, ampicillin, ceftiofur) [15–18], hormones (prostaglandin F_{2α}) [18,19], and supportive therapy (nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs and sera) [20,21]. Due to the diversity of molecules proposed to treat PM and CE and the absence of conventional treatment, different treatment approaches may exist in the field. However, little is known about the state of PM and CE and

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their management in field conditions. To our knowledge, the study of Hehenberger et al. [22] in Switzerland was the only survey that was carried out to determine practices of veterinarians in the field in dealing with PM and CE.

In this respect, the practices of veterinarians in Algeria toward PM and CE remain unknown. Thus, the objective of the current work was to study the practices of Algerian veterinarians regarding diagnosis and treatment of PM and CE in field conditions, including the influence of veterinarian experience, practice of artificial insemination, and number of bovine farms managed on those practices.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Questionnaire

Collection of information on the practices of veterinarians toward PM and CE was carried out using a questionnaire-based survey. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section was designed to collect information about veterinarians and their activities, including sex, years of experience, main activity, number of bovine farms visited, average number of cows per farm, and whether the veterinarian practices artificial insemination. The second and third sections included multiple-choice questions about diagnosis and treatment of PM and CE. For each choice, veterinarians were invited to indicate the frequency of application on a Likert scale (very frequently (more than 80% of cases), frequently (40% to 80% of cases), sometimes (10% to 40% of cases), rarely (1% to 20% of cases), or never (<1% of cases)). The questionnaire was formatted using Google forms and submitted to five practicing veterinarians for assessment. The questionnaire was then distributed as electronic or paper copies to 600 veterinarians. The electronic copies were sent by e-mail to veterinarians affiliated with the National Center for Artificial Insemination and Genetic Improvement (CNIAAG) and the Algerian Veterinary Technical Group (GTVA), whereas the paper copies were distributed by hand on the occasion of professional veterinary meetings.

2.2. Data analysis

The recovered data were loaded into a statistical package (IBM SPSS 20; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) for statistical analysis.

For descriptive statistics, the frequencies of application of diagnosis and treatment of PM and CE were presented as ordinal variables on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently).

Logistic regression was performed to show the influence of factors (veterinarians' characteristics) on outcome variables (frequency of using diagnostic and therapeutic approaches towards PM and CE). The outcome variables were regrouped into 2 categories: (i) frequent use (regrouping the modalities of frequently and

very frequently) and (ii) infrequent use (sometimes, rarely, and never). Factors were regrouped as follow: years of experience (<10 years, >10 years), main practice (bovine vs. other species), number of bovine farms managed (>50 farms vs. <50 farms), and practice of artificial insemination (yes vs. no).

For univariate regression, chi-square analyses were performed between each predictor and each outcome variable. When $P < 0.05$, a univariate regression was considered and calculation of the odds ratio (OR) and 95% confidence interval (CI) was carried out.

For multivariate regressions, the variables with a P-value of <0.2 from the univariate regression were included in a series of backward stepwise logistic regressions to obtain a minimal model containing only significant variables ($P < 0.05$) and the OR and 95% CI were calculated to assess the strength of the relationship between two or more factors and one outcome variable.

3. Results

One hundred and sixteen questionnaires were completed, representing 18.2% of the total surveyed veterinarians.

3.1. General characteristics of the veterinarians

The results revealed that 58.6% (68/116) of veterinarians had more than 10 years of experience. The percentages of veterinarians practicing bovine medicine and artificial insemination were 65.1% (69/106) and 57.4% (66/115), respectively. In addition, 53% (61/115) of veterinarians monitored 50 or more bovine herds.

3.2. Descriptive results

3.2.1. Diagnosis of PM

The results on diagnosis showed that 83.5% (81/97) of veterinarians measure, frequently or very frequently, body temperature. Moreover, 71.8% (74/103) of the veterinarians perform transrectal examination by hand, frequently or very frequently, to diagnose PM, while only 17.1% (13/76) do it by echography. A fetid discharge and fever were observed, frequently or very frequently, by 91.0% (101/111) and 83.5% (86/103) of surveyed veterinarians, respectively. More than 60% of veterinarians observe, frequently or very frequently, an appetite loss (74.5%, 70/94), a decrease in milk production (69.4%, 68/98), or a distended uterus at rectal examination (64.0%, 57/89) (Figure 1).

3.2.2. Treatment of PM

The results of PM treatment are given in Tables 1 and 2. They revealed that intrauterine (IU) treatment, mainly antibiotics, was applied, frequently or very frequently, by 76.4% (55/72) of veterinarians. Tetracyclines are used, frequently or very frequently, by 72.2% (70/97) of veterinarians. Penicillin-streptomycin association is, frequently or very frequently, selected by 53.4% (47/88) of surveyed veterinarians. Cephalosporins are used by 32.5%

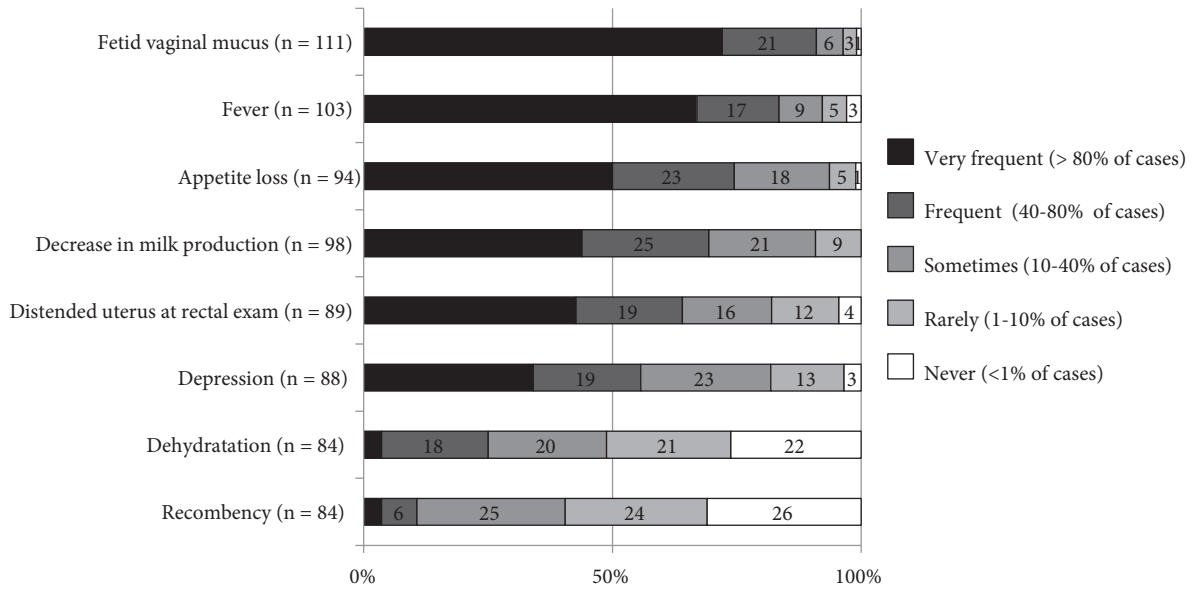


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of the symptoms of PM from the perspective of the responding veterinarians, n = number of responses.

Table 1. Frequencies of the intrauterine drugs used in cows with PM.

| Treatment | Very frequent (>80% of cases) | Frequent (40%–80% of cases) | Sometimes (10%–40% of cases) | Rarely (1%–10% of cases) | Never (<1% of cases) | Number of respondents |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Tetracycline | 53.6% | 18.6% | 12.4% | 8.2% | 7.2% | 97 |
| Penicillin-streptomycin | 38.6% | 14.8% | 5.7% | 13.6% | 27.3% | 88 |
| Uterine lavage | 20.0% | 15.3% | 16.5% | 14.1% | 34.1% | 85 |
| Cephalosporin | 20.5% | 12.0% | 19.3% | 8.4% | 39.8% | 83 |
| Potassium permanganate | 14.8% | 7.4% | 17.3% | 14.8% | 45.7% | 81 |
| Penicillin | 13.2% | 15.8% | 14.5% | 11.8% | 44.7% | 76 |
| Iodine solution | 7.5% | 7.5% | 11.3% | 17.5% | 56.3% | 83 |
| Aminoglycoside | 2.9% | 7.2% | 7.2% | 8.7% | 73.9% | 69 |
| Rifaximin | 00.0% | 4.4% | 7.4% | 82.4% | 5.9% | 68 |

Table 2. Frequencies of parenteral antibiotics used by veterinarians in cases of PM.

| Treatment | Very frequent (>80% of cases) | Frequent (40%–80% of cases) | Sometimes (10%–40% of cases) | Rarely (1%–10% of cases) | Never (<1% of cases) | Number of respondents |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Penicillins | 42.9% | 25.0% | 20.2% | 3.6% | 8.3% | 84 |
| Tetracyclines | 10.3% | 7.4% | 4.4% | 7.4% | 70.6% | 80 |
| Cephalosporin | 36.4% | 14.3% | 6.5% | 6.5% | 36.4% | 77 |
| Macrolides | 27.5% | 20.0% | 17.5% | 8.8% | 26.3% | 80 |
| Sulfamides | 15.5% | 12.7% | 23.9% | 15.5% | 32.4% | 71 |
| Aminoglycosides | 6.2% | 13.8% | 13.8% | 12.3% | 53.8% | 65 |
| Quinolones | 4.7% | 7.8% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 62.5% | 64 |
| Phenicol | 0% | 3.0% | 6.1% | 9.1% | 81.8% | 66 |

(27/83) of veterinarians frequently or very frequently. In addition, 48.2% (41/85) of responding veterinarians perform uterine lavage rarely or never to treat PM. Iodine solution, aminoglycosides, and penicillins are rarely or never used.

Concerning parenteral administration of drugs, 80% of veterinarians perform, frequently or very frequently, parenteral antibiotherapy. Penicillins, tetracyclines, and cephalosporins are, frequently or very frequently, used by more than 50% of veterinarians (Table 1). Macrolides are also injected, frequently or very frequently, by 47.5% (38/80) of veterinarians. Quinolones and phenicols are rarely or never used. Veterinarians included supporting therapy frequently or very frequently, particularly vitamins (73.1%, 68/93), PGF2α (61.4%, 75/105), and nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (68.2%, 60/88).

3.2.3. Diagnosis of CE

Visual examination of vulvar discharge and rectal palpation are performed to diagnose CE frequently or very frequently by the majority of the veterinarians (91.3%, 94/103 and 86.7%, 85/98, respectively). Moreover, monitoring body temperature and vaginal examination by gloved hand are performed frequently or very frequently by 65.1% (54/83) and 60.9% (56/92) of veterinarians, respectively.

The results revealed that most veterinarians do not use a vaginoscope or a speculum frequently or very frequently (29.8% and 17.5%, respectively). Furthermore, 97% of veterinarians never use a laboratory.

Pus flakes and mucopurulent vaginal discharge are observed frequently or very frequently by 76.7% (79/103) and 75.8% (75/99) of veterinarians, respectively. Half of veterinarians observe general symptoms and a distended uterus in rectal examination (60.2% (56/93), 55.1% (49/89), respectively) (Figure 2).

3.2.4. Treatment of CE

In the case of CE presenting with mucopurulent or purulent discharge, an association between general and intrauterine treatments was frequently or very frequently established by 64.1% (66/103) and 71.3% (72/101) of veterinarians, respectively.

PGF2α is used by 78.6% (77/98) of veterinarians frequently or very frequently to treat CE and it is used even in the absence of a corpus luteum by 56.5% (61/108) of veterinarians.

Intrauterine administration of antibiotics is carried out by 87% of veterinarians. Tetracycline and penicillin-streptomycin association are used frequently or very frequently by 57% (49/86) and 58% (51/88) of veterinarians, respectively. Cephalosporins are used frequently or very frequently by 40.5% (32/79) of veterinarians (Table 3).

The systemic administration of antibiotics is used systematically by 53.3% of veterinarians to treat CE. Parenteral penicillins were systemically applied frequently or very frequently by 64.4% (58/90) of veterinarians, whereas macrolides and cephalosporins were frequently or very frequently injected by 49.4% (40/83) and 48.2% (40/83) of practitioners, respectively (Table 4).

3.3. Univariate analysis

The results of univariate analysis are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

3.3.1. Puerperal metritis

Compared to veterinarians whose main activity was not bovine medicine, bovine practitioners (main activity was bovine medicine) were 3 times more likely to practice palpation of the uterus (83.6% vs. 61.8%, P = 0.022) and 4.8 times less likely to observe an elevation of temperature (75.8% vs. 93.5%, P = 0.037) for diagnosis of PM. They were also 4.5 times less likely to use IU tetracycline (61.4% vs.

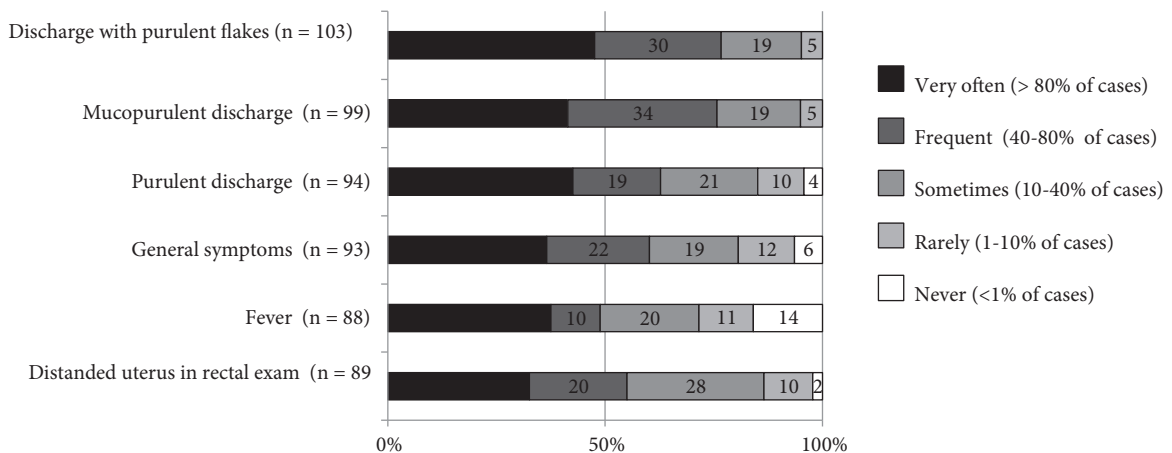


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of the symptoms of CE from the perspective of the responding veterinarians, n = number of responses.

Table 3. Frequencies of the intrauterine drugs used in cows with CE.

| Treatment | Very frequent (>80% of cases) | Frequent (40%–80% of cases) | Sometimes (10%–40% of cases) | Rarely (1%–10% of cases) | Never (<1% of cases) | Number of respondents |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Tetracycline | 43.0% | 14.0% | 11.6% | 10.5% | 20.9% | 86 |
| Penicillin-streptomycin | 39.8% | 18.2% | 13.6% | 3.4% | 25.0% | 88 |
| Cephalosporin | 34.2% | 6.3% | 19.0% | 5.1% | 35.4% | 79 |
| Uterine lavage | 20.0% | 15.0% | 12.5% | 15.0% | 37.5% | 80 |
| Potassium permanganate | 18.4% | 11.8% | 13.2% | 11.8% | 44.7% | 76 |
| Penicillin | 16.2% | 21.6% | 14.9% | 8.1% | 39.2% | 74 |
| Other | 6.2% | 7.7% | 9.2% | 12.3% | 64.6% | 65 |
| Diluted betadine | 4.1% | 13.7% | 16.4% | 13.7% | 52.1% | 73 |
| Aminoglycosides | 5.8% | 8.7% | 13.0% | 5.8% | 66.7% | 69 |
| Rifaximin | 0% | 1.4% | 5.8% | 15.9% | 76.8% | 69 |

Table 4. Frequencies of parenteral antibiotic therapy used in cows with CE.

| Treatment | Very frequent (>80% of cases) | Frequent (40%–80% of cases) | Sometimes (10%–40% of cases) | Rarely (1%–10% of cases) | Never (<1% of cases) | Number of respondents |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Penicillins | 38.9% | 25.6% | 13.3% | 7.8% | 14.4% | 90 |
| Tetracycline | 33.3% | 27.3% | 9.1% | 6.1% | 24.2% | 33 |
| Cephalosporin | 32.5% | 15.7% | 8.4% | 12.0% | 31.3% | 83 |
| Association | 31.9% | 18.1% | 20.8% | 9.7% | 19.4% | 72 |
| Macrolides | 25.9% | 23.5% | 14.8% | 9.9% | 25.9% | 81 |
| Sulfamides | 13.2% | 11.8% | 23.7% | 9.2% | 42.1% | 76 |
| Aminoglycosides | 7.2% | 14.5% | 15.9% | 15.9% | 46.4% | 69 |
| Quinolones | 5.9% | 8.8% | 11.8% | 13.2% | 60.3% | 68 |
| Phenicol | 1.5% | 3.0% | 6.1% | 7.6% | 81.8% | 66 |

87.5%, $P = 0.009$), 3.4 times more likely to use parenteral cephalosporins (64.4% vs. 34.8%, $P = 0.02$), and 3.1 times less likely to use vitamins to treat PM (65.5% vs. 85.4%, $P = 0.05$).

Veterinarians with more than 10 years of experience were 2.7 times less likely to use intrauterine tetracyclines (64.9% vs. 83.3%, $P = 0.042$) and 5.4 times more likely to use IU cephalosporins (43.4% vs. 12.5%, $P = 0.003$) compared to veterinarians with less than 10 years of experience.

Inseminators were 4.3 times less likely than those not practicing insemination to take body temperatures (75.5% vs. 93.0%, $P = 0.019$) and to observe fever (76.8% vs. 93.5%, $P = 0.021$). Inseminators were also 4.7 times more likely to use IU cephalosporins (44% vs. 14.3%, $P = 0.004$), 5.6 times more likely to not use systemic treatment (27% vs. 6.25%, $P = 0.023$), 4.3 times less likely to use systemic penicillin (52.3% vs. 82.9%, $P = 0.003$), and 2.5 times more

likely to use systemic cephalosporins (60.1% vs. 38.9%, $P = 0.053$).

In comparison with those monitoring fewer than 50 bovine farms, veterinarians monitoring more than 50 farms were 3.1 times less likely to use IU tetracycline (62% vs. 83.7%, $P = 0.015$), and 3.8 times more likely to use IU cephalosporin (42.6% vs. 16.2%, $P = 0.01$). They were also 2.6 times less likely to use parenteral macrolides (35.6% vs. 61.1%, $P = 0.022$).

3.3.2. Clinical endometritis

When compared to noninseminators, inseminators were 4.7 times more likely to use echography (37.0% vs. 11.1%, $P = 0.008$) and 2.9 times more likely to use a vaginoscope (37.5% vs. 17.1%, $P = 0.043$) to diagnose CE. They were also 2.5 times less likely to observe fever (38.3% vs. 61%, $P = 0.034$) and 2.5 times less likely to observe an alteration of the general state of the cow (50.0% vs. 72.5%, $P = 0.029$).

Table 5. Summary of the results of a univariate logistic regression with statements regarding diagnosis and treatment PM.

| Parameter | Bovines as main activity | P | >10 years of experience | P |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| Palpation of the uterus | 3.03 (1.15–8.00) | 0.022 | | |
| Fever | 0.21 (0.046–1.01) | 0.037 | | |
| Intrauterine tetracycline | 0.22 (0.07–0.73) | 0.009 | 0.37 (0.14–0.98) | 0.042 |
| Intrauterine cephalosporin | | | 5.37 (1.65–17.47) | 0.003 |
| Parenteral cephalosporin | 3.40 (1.19–9.74) | 0.02 | | |
| Parenteral macrolide | | | | |
| Vitamins | 0.32 (0.1–1.04) | 0.05 | | |
| | Practice of AI | P | >50 herds | P |
| Palpation of the uterus | | | | |
| Taking rectal temperature | 0.23 (0.06–0.85) | 0.019 | | |
| Fever | 0.23 (0.06–0.86) | 0.021 | | |
| No parenteral antibiotics | 5.55 (1.12–27.65) | | | |
| Intrauterine tetracycline | | | 0.32 (0.12–0.82) | 0.015 |
| Parenteral tetracycline | 0.4 (0.16–0.97) | 0.042 | | |
| Intrauterine cephalosporin | 4.71 (1.57–14.15) | 0.004 | 3.84 (1.34–10.91) | 0.01 |
| Parenteral cephalosporin | 2.46 (0.98–6.15) | 0.053 | | |
| Parenteral penicillins | 0.23 (0.082–0.62) | 0.003 | | |
| Parenteral macrolides | | | 0.35 (0.14–0.87) | 0.022 |

Table 6. Summary of the results of the univariate logistic regression model for statements regarding the diagnosis and treatment of CE.

| Parameter | Bovines as main activity | P | >10 years of experience | P |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------|-------------------------|-------|
| Rectal temperature | 0.29 (0.1–0.84) | 0.019 | | |
| Fever | 0.23 (0.09–0.61) | 0.003 | 0.44 (0.18–1.03) | 0.056 |
| Distended uterus | | | 2.52 (1.06–5.97) | 0.034 |
| Intrauterine tetracycline | 0.30 (0.11–0.80) | 0.014 | | |
| Intrauterine cephalosporin | 4.17 (1.41–12.34) | 0.008 | 3.16 (1.21–8.28) | 0.017 |
| Parenteral antibiotics systematically | 0.40 (0.17–0.96) | 0.037 | | |
| PGF2α without corpus luteum | | | 2.33 (1.06–5.10) | 0.033 |
| | Practice of AI | P | >50 herds | P |
| Echography | 4.69 (1.41–15.56) | 0.008 | | |
| Vaginoscopy | 2.90 (1.01–8.33) | 0.043 | | |
| Fever | 0.4 (0.17–0.94) | 0.034 | 0.28 (0.12–0.67) | 0.004 |
| Alteration of the general state | 0.38 (0.16–0.92) | 0.029 | 0.30 (0.13–0.74) | 0.007 |
| Intrauterine tetracycline | | | 0.34 (0.14–0.83) | 0.017 |
| Intrauterine cephalosporin | 8.70 (2.84–26.69) | <0.001 | 2.60 (1.01–6.70) | 0.046 |
| Parenteral antibiotics systematically | 0.31 (0.14–0.70) | 0.004 | 0.35 (0.16–0.79) | 0.01 |
| Parenteral macrolides | | | 0.38 (0.15–0.94) | 0.034 |
| Parenteral vitamins | | | 0.2 (0.08–0.52) | 0.001 |

Furthermore, inseminators were 3.2 times less likely to use parenteral antibiotics systematically (40.7% vs. 68.9%, $P = 0.004$) and 8.7 times more likely to use IU cephalosporin for CE treatment (60.0% vs. 14.7%, $P < 0.001$).

Bovine practitioners were 3.4 times less likely to measure body temperature (51.1% vs. 78.6%, $P = 0.019$) and 4.3 times less likely to observe fever (32.7% vs. 67.9%, $P = 0.003$). They were also 3.3 times less likely to use IU tetracycline (41.3% vs. 70.0%, $P = 0.014$), 2.5 times less likely to use parenteral antibiotics systematically (41.3% vs. 63.6%, $P = 0.037$), and 4 times more likely to use IU cephalosporins (55.6% vs. 23.1%, $P = 0.008$) for CE treatment.

Veterinarians with more than 10 years of experience were 2 times less likely to observe fever (40% vs. 60.5%, $P = 0.056$) and 3 times more likely to note a distended uterus (64.7% vs. 41.7%, $P = 0.034$). They were 3 times more likely to use IU cephalosporins (52.3% vs. 25.7%, $P = 0.017$) and 2 times more likely to use PGF2 α in the absence of a corpus luteum (65.1% vs. 44.4%, $P = 0.033$).

Veterinarians monitoring more than 50 bovine farms were 3.6 times less likely to observe fever (33.3% vs. 64.3%, $P = 0.004$) and 3.3 times less likely to observe alteration of the general state of the cow (46.9% vs. 74.4%, $P = 0.007$). They were also 2.9 times less likely to use tetracyclines (44.2% vs. 69.8%, $P = 0.017$) and 2.6 times more likely to use IU cephalosporins (50.0% vs. 27.8%, $P = 0.046$). In addition, they were 2.9 times less likely to use parenteral antibiotics systematically (48.9% vs. 66.0%, $P = 0.01$), 2.6 times less likely to use systemic macrolides (39.1% vs. 62.9%, $P = 0.034$), and 5 times less likely to use vitamins (43.5% vs. 79.5%, $P = 0.001$).

3.4. Multivariate analysis

Inseminators were 4 times more likely to use IU cephalosporins to treat PM and 5 times more likely to treat CE. Likewise, veterinarians with more than 10 years of experience were 4 times more likely to use IU cephalosporins to treat PM. Moreover, bovine practitioners were 3 times less likely to observe hyperthermia in cases of CE (Table 7).

4. Discussion

The present survey was undertaken to investigate practices of Algerian veterinarians in the diagnosis and treatment of PM and CE. We hypothesize that factors related to the experience of the veterinarians, their practice of AI, main activity, and number of farms monitored may influence their practices towards the uterine infections.

It was reported that clinical diagnosis of PM is based on the presence of general and local signs including purulent vaginal discharge, fever, appetite loss, decrease in milk production, and distended uterus [8,10,23]. In our survey, these signs were adopted by most veterinarians for PM diagnosis. Moreover, the surveyed veterinarians indicated that signs of intoxication are rarely present, which may be related to early diagnosis before intensification of the animal's state and the appearance of signs of intoxication. A similar survey conducted with Swiss veterinarians reported the same results for PM diagnosis [22].

The use of systemic antibiotics is the conventional treatment of PM [17,24]. In our study, the majority of Algerian veterinarians used systemic antibiotics for PM. A similar result was observed for Swiss practitioners [22]. In the current survey, practitioners used penicillins most often, followed by tetracyclines, cephalosporins, and aminoglycosides. Likewise, in a study in Sweden, PM was treated principally with penicillins and secondarily with tetracyclines. In the same study, cephalosporins were not used by veterinarians [25]. In this study, the choice of the treatment was based on the recommendations of the Swedish policy recommending penicillin as the first choice antibiotic for PM [25]. Tetracyclines, however, were the principal antibiotics reported by Swiss veterinarians for PM treatment [13]. Different studies were conducted to reveal the optimum antibiotics for PM. In this respect, the efficiency of tetracycline and penicillins requires their use at high concentrations, which enhances their withdrawal periods in meat and milk [26]. Cephalosporin is efficient at recommended doses. Furthermore, at the recommended dose, high concentrations of cephalosporin were observed in the serum, endometrium, caruncles, cotyledons, and lochia with no withdrawal periods [26–

Table 7. Summary of the results of a series of multivariable logistic regression models for statements regarding the diagnosis and treatment of PM and CE.

| Parameter for PM | | | >10 years of experience | P | Practice of AI | P |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------|-------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Intrauterine cephalosporin | | | 3.8(1.13–13.36) | 0.031 | 3.5 (1.02–12.23) | 0.046 |
| Parameter for CE | Bovines as main activity | P | >10 years of experience | P | Practice of AI | P |
| Hyperthermia | 0.29 (0.11–0.83) | 0.02 | 0.26 (0.18–1.34) | 0.16 | | |
| Intrauterine cephalosporin | | | 2.8 (0.91–8.76) | 0.072 | 5.1 (1.58–16.84) | 0.007 |

28]. In order to show the antibiotics of choice for PM, Smith et al. compared penicillin G and cephalosporin. No difference in terms of cure was observed between the two tested antibiotics [13]. Thus, cephalosporin seems more appropriate for systemic treatment of PM. The lack of use of cephalosporin in our study may be attributed to its price and its relatively recent introduction to the field compared to penicillins and tetracyclines. In our survey, bovine practitioners and inseminators more frequently used cephalosporins, which may be due to their more frequent dealings with bovine pathologies including PM, allowing the adoption of the appropriate treatment.

In the present survey, almost 80% of surveyed veterinarians performed intrauterine treatment for PM with tetracycline and to a lesser extent with penicillin-streptomycin and cephalosporin, respectively. Inseminators and veterinarians monitoring more than 50 bovine farms used more IU cephalosporin. In a similar survey in Switzerland [22], the results revealed that more than 90% of veterinarians performed intrauterine therapy using tetracycline and cephalosporin, but not penicillin-streptomycin. Many studies showed beneficial effects of IU use of oxytetracycline at high doses [9], but other studies reported the noneffectiveness [13]. In addition it is irritating to the endometrium and alters local immunity. However, our survey, like that in Switzerland, revealed that tetracyclines are still used by veterinarians for PM treatment.

In association with antibiotics, several molecules are used to reinforce the treatment for uterine infections. Among these molecules, PGF₂α and nonsteroid antiinflammatory drugs are the most often implicated in PM treatment. Regarding PGF₂α, it is used for its luteolytic effect, uterotonic nature, and leukocyte stimulation. However, many studies reported no effect of PGF₂α when used to treat uterine infection. In our survey and that in Switzerland, PGF₂α was used systematically despite the contradictory results concerning its effect. In cases of PM, one study evaluated the use of PGF₂α as a complementary treatment to cephalosporin. It was concluded that 2 doses of PGF₂α were beneficial for primiparous cows having PM but not for multiparous cows [29].

Concerning nonsteroid antiinflammatory drugs, the Algerian veterinarians, like those of Switzerland [22], frequently use them in association with antibiotics. The use of nonsteroid antiinflammatory drugs in cases of PM may be explained by the presence of fever. However, there is a contradiction regarding the benefits of nonsteroid antiinflammatory drugs in PM. Amiridis et al. showed a more rapid uterine involution and onset of ovarian activity in animals having PM treated by nonsteroid antiinflammatory drugs (flunixin meglumine) in addition to systematic antimicrobials [30]. On the contrary, other

studies found no superior effect when these drugs were used in combination with antibiotics [31,32]. Further studies are required to provide evidence-based medicine with the proof about the use of nonsteroid antiinflammatory drugs to treat PM.

Clinical endometritis is a uterine infection occurring after 21 days postpartum, characterized by the presence of purulent material in the vagina [8]. In the present study, the surveyed veterinarians observed CE between 22 and 30 days postpartum. Furthermore, they frequently observed local symptoms by visual exam of the vulvar discharge and rectal palpation. Likewise, the survey in Switzerland revealed that CE was diagnosed between 21 and 35 days postpartum by local symptoms. Moreover, in this study, rectal palpation and vaginal examination were the diagnostic tools used [22]. Previous clinical studies reported that efficient tools for CE diagnosis are detection of purulent material in the vagina by gloved hand or vaginoscope and rectal palpation of the uterus combined with external inspection of vulvar discharge [11]. In the current survey, Algerian veterinarians used rectal palpation of the uterus and external inspection of vulvar discharge to diagnosis CE. Concerning Swiss veterinarians, diagnosis is based on rectal palpation and detection of purulent material in the vagina by gloved hand. CE diagnosis tools adopted by Algerian and Swiss veterinarians could be justified by their efficiency and practicability, not requiring an instrument (vaginoscope).

In our survey as well as in the survey performed in Switzerland [22], PGF₂α is used by the majority of veterinarians for treating CE. Previous studies showed that PGF₂α is efficient in the treatment of CE when a corpus luteum exists. Thus, the purpose of inclusion of PGF₂α in CE treatment is to provoke luteolysis, the apparition of estrus, and subsequent uterine contractility. These processes lead to clearance of the uterine cavity. Moreover, PGF₂α improves the local immunity of the uterus and the recovery of the physiologic uterine state [33,34]. In addition, PGF₂α was reported to be preferred to antibiotics due to its null withdrawal period and its lack of implication in the emergence of resistant bacteria [35]. In cases of CE with absence of a corpus luteum, several clinical trials showed conflicting results about the efficiency of PGF₂α [12,36,37]. In our survey, an important part of the veterinarians used PGF₂α in the absence of a corpus luteum. Even in the absence of a corpus luteum, PGF₂α increases leukotriene B₄ secretion by the uterus, which supports chemotaxis, cell-mediated cytotoxicity, phagocytosis, and lymphocyte function [34]. This may justify its use by the surveyed Algerian veterinarians.

Intrauterine administration of antibiotics is considered as the best approach for CE. This is because infection is limited to the endometrium. In our study, tetracycline

is used by most surveyed veterinarians. However, Swiss veterinarians mainly used IU cephalosporin for CE [22]. The selection of tetracycline by Algerian veterinarians may be attributed to its high endometrial concentration and its poor absorption after intrauterine administration [38]. However, bacteriological studies showed that a large part of bacteria causing uterine infection are resistant to tetracycline [39–44]. Cephapirin is reported as the most appropriate antibiotic for treatment of CE and the effectiveness of cephalosporin against uterine pathogens was proven *in vitro* [39–44]. In addition, it has no withdrawal period in milk and meat. In our study, the multivariate analysis indicated that inseminators, whatever their experience, used IU cephalosporin more frequently to treat CE. This may indicate that inseminators are more concerned about uterine health, which is a determinant factor for the success of AI.

Systemic antibiotics are also used by Algerian veterinarians (more than half) to treat CE. In the Swiss survey, most of the veterinarians did not use systemic antibiotics. It was reported that administration of

antibiotics within the uterus is efficient to treat CE without a need for further systemic antibiotics. Furthermore, the use of systemic antibiotics is costly and requires long withdrawal period in milk. Thus, the parenteral use of antibiotics in cases of CE by Algerian veterinarians is not justified.

Finally, we conclude that the diagnoses of PM and CE by surveyed veterinarians are close to the reported criteria. However, a contradiction in the treatment for CE and PM is observed, particularly in the use of IU antibiotics in PM and PGF2 in the absence of a corpus luteum in CE. Moreover, some antibiotics used are not reported in the literature, like macrolides and penicillin-streptomycin association. Inseminators seem more interested in looking for recent advances about treatment of uterine infection and updating their treatment approaches accordingly.

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