

## REFERÊNCIA:

PARANHOS da COSTA, M. J. R.; ANDRIOLO, A. Allonursing and weigh gain in water buffalo calves (*Bubalus bubalis*). In: PROCEEDINGS OF THE 30<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR APPLIED ETHOLOGY, 30, 1996, Guelph. *Anais...* Guelph. 1996. p.126.

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## ALLONURSING AND WEIGHT GAIN IN WATER BUFFALO CALVES (*Bubalus bubalis*)

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Allonursing is part of the behavioural repertoire of water buffalo cows. The effects of this behaviour on the weight gain of calves were investigated in a dairy herd at an experimental station in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Twenty nine cows and their calves were observed on range from birth to weaning (10 months), 3 days per month. These observations were carried out while the calves were in a pasture together with their mothers, from 1000 to 1600 h each day. Sucking behaviour was recorded as follows: recording began when the calves succeeded in getting a teat into its mouth for, at least, 3 seconds, ending when the teats were set free. All animals were weighed monthly. Daily average of time spend sucking was estimated when calves sucked on their own mothers (TM = alone and TMC = collective) and on any other cows than their own mothers (TO = alone and TOC = collective). Two periods were considered: first four months of age (U4) and first eight months of age (U8). The averages were compared by t-test and the Pearson's correlation coefficients were estimated. Males (n = 14) presented higher means than females (n = 15) for weight gain per day (WG), TM and TOC (U8 only), as follows: WG U4 =  $0.49 \pm 0.13$  kg and  $0.39 \pm 0.11$  kg ( $P < 0.01$ ); WG U8 =  $0.43 \pm 0.09$  kg and  $0.33 \pm 0.08$  kg ( $P < 0.01$ ); TM U4 =  $5.03 \pm 2.67$  min and  $1.70 \pm 2.15$  min ( $P < 0.001$ ); TM U8 =  $2.96 \pm 1.38$  min and  $0.98 \pm 1.09$  min ( $P < 0.001$ ); TOC U8 =  $6.80 \pm 4.23$  min and  $3.64 \pm 3.23$  min ( $P < 0.05$ ), respectively for males and females. Correlation coefficients were significant between TM and WG for males ( $r = 0.610$  and  $0.719$ , for U4 and U8 respectively;  $P < 0.05$ ), while for females there were significant correlations between TOC and WG ( $r = 0.526$  and  $0.644$ , for U4 and U8 respectively;  $P < 0.05$ ) and between TMC and WG for U4 ( $r = -0.518$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). It was concluded that allonursing affected the weight gain of calves, but in a different way for each sex.

## Acknowledgement

This research was supported by Fundunesp and Fapesp.