BRIEF COMMUNICATION

THE ORIGIN OF THE PHEROMONES CAUSING
PREGNANCY BLOCK IN MICE

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Summary. In contrast to normal and spayed CBA females, spayed and androgenized CBA females are as effective as normal CBA males in blocking ovo-implantation in newly mated P mice. Hence it is concluded that the pheromones involved in producing the block to ovo-implantation are associated with androgens either directly, or indirectly through some androgen-dependent gland.

Recent reports (Dominic, 1964, 1965) suggest that urine is the immediate source of the pheromones produced by male mice which cause the olfactory block to pregnancy in newly mated females (Bruce, 1960; Parkes & Bruce, 1961). Urine of grouped prepuberally or post-puberally castrated male mice retains the pregnancy blocking capacity to some extent (Dominic, 1965) but in each individual this capacity may be too far diminished by castration to be effective when the female is exposed to a single male (Bruce, 1965).

The present report deals with experiments conducted to determine the capacity of normal, spayed or spayed and androgenized alien (CBA) females to block ovo-implantation in newly-mated albino mice belonging to the Parkes (P) strain. The spayed CBA female was androgenized by subcutaneous implantation of a pellet of testosterone (4-androsten-17-ol-3-one propionate, supplied by Steraloids, Ltd, Croydon) weighing about 50 mg. Tests were started about 2 weeks after implantation. The P female was separated from the stud P male after mating (i.e. vaginal plug found) and exposed on Days 1 to 3 *post coitum* to one of the following situations: (1) housed in the proximity of a normal CBA female, the latter confined in an expanded metal corral in the box housing the mated P female; (2) similarly housed in the proximity of a confined spayed CBA female; (3) housed in the proximity of a confined spayed and androgenized CBA female; (4) exposed to fresh urine from twelve spayed and androgenized CBA females; (5) exposed to the same situation as in (4) except that urine from androgenized CBA females was prevented from reaching the newly mated P females (urine controls); (6) housed in boxes with empty corrals; and (7) left undisturbed. Daily vaginal smears were examined from all test females up to Day 7 *post coitum* and a return of vaginal cornification within this period was taken to indicate a blocked pregnancy. The results are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Treatment days 1 to 3 post coitum	No. of females	No. and % of females returning to oestrus	No. of females returning to oestrus, days after stud coitus					No. and % of females pseudopregnant	No. and % of females pregnant
			3	4	5	6	7		
1. Proximity of CBA female	60	14 (23%)	3	6	3	2	-	3 (5%)	43 (72%)
2. Proximity of spayed CBA female	50	16 (32%)	1	6	9	-	-	1 (2%)	33 (66%)
3. Proximity of spayed and androgenized CBA female	57	49 (86%)	25	23	1	-	-	3 (5%)	5 (9%)
4. Urine of spayed and androgenized CBA females	54	44 (81%)	26	17	1	-	-	-	10 (19%)
5. Urine control	54	8 (15%)	-	5	3	-	-	8 (15%)	38 (70%)
6. Empty corral	146	19 (13%)	-	3	8	3	5	13 (9%)	114 (78%)
7. Undisturbed	80	8 (10%)	-	1	3	3	1	4 (5%)	68 (85%)

By contrast with the proximity of normal or spayed CBA females, more than 80% of pregnancies were blocked by the proximity of spayed androgenized females or exposure to their urine. In fact, androgenized CBA females are as effective as normal CBA males in blocking the pregnancy of newly mated P females.

The olfactory block to pregnancy exhibits characteristic time relationships (Bruce, 1961, 1963), and it is interesting to note that the acceleration of oestrus normally associated with the presence of a male (Whitten, 1958) is even more pronounced on exposure to androgenized females or their urine. (Table 2). Among P females exposed to CBA males or their urine about 80% of the females in which pregnancy was blocked returned to oestrus within 4 days *post coitum*, with a peak on Day 4. But among P females exposed to androgenized CBA females or their urine, 98% (91/93) of the females in which pregnancy

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF THE PREGNANCY BLOCKING CAPACITY OF CBA MALES
WITH THAT OF SPAYED AND ANDROGENIZED CBA FEMALES

Treatment days 1 to 3 post coitum	Proportion and % of blocked pregnancy	Proportion of females returning to oestrus on Days 3 and 4 after stud coitus	
		Day 3	Day 4
1. Proximity of CBA male	60/72 (83%)	13/60	32/60
2. Urine of CBA	43/51 (84%)	3/43	27/43
3. Proximity of spayed and androgenized CBA female	49/57 (86%)	25/49	23/49
4. Urine of spayed and androgenized CBA females	44/54 (81%)	26/44	17/44

was blocked returned to oestrus by Day 4, with a peak on Day 3. This implies that androgenized CBA females are more potent than normal CBA males in blocking the pregnancy of P females. It seems likely, therefore, that the pheromones involved in producing pregnancy block in newly-mated mice are associated with androgens directly (i.e. urinary excretion products of androgens) or indirectly through some androgen dependent gland.

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