



**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO VALE DO SÃO FRANCISCO  
CURSO DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM CIÊNCIA ANIMAL**

Rodrigo José de Sousa Gonçalves

**Efeito de diferentes meios e períodos para conservação de ovários caprinos e ovinos sobre a morfologia, a apoptose e o crescimento *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais**

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Trabalho apresentado à Universidade Federal do Vale do São Francisco – UNIVASF, Campus de Ciências Agrárias, como requisito para obtenção do título de Mestre em Ciência Animal.

Orientadora: Prof<sup>a</sup>. Dr<sup>a</sup>. Maria Helena Tavares de Matos

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**FOLHA DE APROVAÇÃO**

Rodrigo José de Sousa Gonçalves

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Mestre em Ciência Animal, pela Universidade Federal do Vale do São  
Francisco

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Prof<sup>a</sup>. Dr<sup>a</sup>. Maria Helena Tavares de Matos  
Universidade Federal do Vale do São Francisco – UNIVASF  
Orientadora

---

Prof<sup>a</sup>. Dr<sup>a</sup>. Isabel Bezerra Lima Verde  
Universidade Tiradentes – UNIT  
Examinadora

---

Prof<sup>a</sup>. Dr<sup>a</sup>. Juliana Jales de Hollanda Celestino  
Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-brasileira  
Examinadora

Petrolina, de de 2012.

**À minha família,  
DEDICO**

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“Descobri finalmente aquilo  
que distingue o homem dos  
outros animais: os problemas  
de dinheiro e sexo”

**Jules Renard, Adaptado por Rodrigo Gonçalves.**

## RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi avaliar o efeito das condições de transporte do tecido ovariano (meios e períodos de conservação) sobre a morfologia, a apoptose e o desenvolvimento de folículos pré-antrais ovinos e caprinos cultivados *in vitro*. Para isto dois experimentos foram conduzidos nas diferentes espécies utilizando a mesma metodologia. Após a coleta, cada par de ovários (n=10) foi dividido em 13 fragmentos, sendo um dos fragmentos diretamente fixado e destinado à análise histológica (controle fresco). Os fragmentos restantes foram conservados individualmente em criotubos contendo Meio Essencial Mínimo (MEM sem suplementos) ou MEM<sup>+</sup> (com suplementos) à 35°C por 6 ou 12 h no transportador de oócitos (TO) sem (não cultivado) ou com um subsequente cultivo *in vitro* por 1 ou 5 dias. Após cada período de conservação e/ou cultivo, os fragmentos foram processados para análises histológicas e de Tunel. Os resultados mostraram que a conservação de tecido ovariano ovino em MEM ou MEM<sup>+</sup>, independente do período, mantém as percentagens de folículos normais similar ao controle (P>0.05). Para a espécie caprina, somente o tecido ovariano conservado em MEM<sup>+</sup> e aqueles conservados neste meio e cultivados por 1 d, independente do período, mantiveram (P>0.05) a percentagem de folículos normais similar ao controle fresco. Não houve diferenças (P>0.05) entre a percentagem de folículos primordiais ou em desenvolvimento entre os tecidos preservados (não cultivados) e o controle para ambas as espécies. Em ovinos, após o cultivo, observou-se um aumento (P<0.05) na ativação folicular, comparado com o controle e os tecidos conservados (não cultivado). Resultado similar foi observado para folículos caprinos, comparados ao controle fresco, exceto quando o tecido ovariano foi preservado por 6 h em MEM e cultivado por 1 dia. Além disso, após 5 dias, os tecidos ovinos conservados em MEM por 12 h ou em MEM<sup>+</sup> em ambos os meios aumentaram (P<0.05) os diâmetros folicular e oocitário quando comparados ao controle e aos outros tratamentos. Em caprinos, após 5 dias de cultivo, folículos conservados em ambos os meios aumentaram (P<0.05) os diâmetros folicular e oocitário quando comparados ao controle e aos demais tratamentos. Comparado ao controle, em ovinos, as células TUNEL positivas aumentaram (P<0.05) após 5 dias de cultivo de tecido ovino conservados em MEM por ambos os períodos e naqueles conservados em MEM<sup>+</sup> por 12 h. Por outro lado, a apoptose aumentou (P<0.05) após 5 dias de cultivo em tecido ovariano caprino conservado por 12 h em ambos os meios, comparado ao controle e aos tecidos preservados (não cultivados). Em ambas as espécies, a percentagem de células TUNEL positivas também aumentaram (P<0.05) em folículos cultivados por 5 dias após terem sido conservados em MEM<sup>+</sup> por 12 h, comparado com 6 h. Somente os tecidos ovinos conservados em MEM<sup>+</sup> por 6 h mantiveram (P<0.05) a percentagem de células apoptóticas similares entre os tecidos conservados (não cultivados) e cultivados por 1 ou 5 dias. Em conclusão, o presente estudo mostrou que o tecido ovariano ovino e caprino pode ser conservado com sucesso em MEM<sup>+</sup> à 35°C por até 6 h utilizando um TO, promovendo taxas de apoptose inferiores aos períodos de conservação mais longos, sem comprometer sua habilidade para se desenvolver *in vitro*.

**Palavras-chave:** Cabras, ovelhas, preservação, folículo ovariano, cultivo *in vitro*.

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the effect of ovarian tissue transportation conditions (medium and period of time) on the morphology, apoptosis and development of ovine and caprine preantral follicles cultured *in vitro*. For this purpose, two experiments were performed using the same methodology in the different species. After collecting, each ovarian pair was cut into 13 slices, with one fragment being fixed immediately (fresh control). The remaining ovarian slices were placed individually in cryotubes containing conservation medium (MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup>) and stored at 35°C for 6 or 12 h without (non-cultured) or with a subsequent culture for 1 or 5 days. After each incubation and/or culture period, the fragments were processed to enable routine histological and TUNEL examination. The results showed that preservation of ovine tissues in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup>, independently of the period, resulted in similar percentages ( $P>0.05$ ) of normal follicles to fresh control. For caprine species, only ovarian tissue preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> and those preserved in this medium and cultured for 1 day, independently of the period maintained ( $P>0.05$ ) the percentages of normal follicles similar to fresh control. No change ( $P>0.05$ ) in the percentage of primordial or growing follicles was observed between fresh and preserved (non-cultured) tissues for both species. For ovine, in all culture conditions, there was an increase in follicular activation compared to the fresh control and preserved (non-cultured) tissues. Similar result was observed for caprine follicles compared to the fresh control, except when ovarian tissues was preserved for 6 h in MEM and cultured for 1 day. Moreover, after 5 days, ovine tissues preserved in MEM for 12 h or in MEM<sup>+</sup> for both periods, increased ( $P<0.05$ ) follicular and oocyte diameters when compared to fresh control and other treatments. In caprine, after 5 days of culture, stored follicles in both media and preservation periods, increased ( $P<0.05$ ) follicular and oocyte diameters when compared to fresh control and other treatments. Ovine TUNEL positive cells increased ( $P<0.05$ ) after 5 days of culture in ovarian tissues preserved in MEM for both periods and in those preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for 12 h when compared to fresh control. Nevertheless, apoptosis increased ( $P<0.05$ ) after 5 days of culture in caprine ovarian tissue preserved for 12 h in both media, compared with control and preserved (non-cultured) tissues. For both species, the percentage of TUNEL positive cells also increased ( $P<0.05$ ) in follicles cultured for 5 days in MEM<sup>+</sup> after being preserved for 12 h, compared to 6 h. Only for tissues preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for 6 h, the percentage of apoptotic cells was similar among non-cultured ovine tissues and tissues cultured for 1 and 5 days ( $P>0.05$ ). In conclusion, the present study showed that ovine and caprine ovarian tissue can be successfully preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> at 35°C for up to 6 h using an oocyte transporter, providing lower apoptotic rates than longer storage periods, without affecting their ability to develop *in vitro*.

**Palavras-chave:** Goats, sheep, storage, ovarian follicle, *in vitro* culture.

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**LISTA DE ABREVIATURAS, SIGLAS E SÍMBOLOS**

%:	Porcentagem
µg:	Micrograma
µL:	Microlitro
µm:	Micrômetro
°C:	Graus Celsius
BSA:	<i>Bovine serum albumin</i> (Albumina sérica bovina)
CIV:	Cultivo <i>in vitro</i>
<i>et al.:</i>	<i>et alii</i> (e colaboradores)
FIV:	Fecundação <i>in vitro</i>
FSH:	<i>Follicle Stimulating Hormone</i> (Hormônio folículo estimulante)
g:	Gramas
h:	Horas
L:	Litros
LH:	<i>Luteinizing hormone</i> (Hormônio Luteinizante)
MEM:	<i>Minimal Essential Medium</i> (Meio Essencial Mínimo)
MII:	Metáfase II
MIV:	Maturação <i>in vitro</i>
mL:	Mililitros
MOIFOPA:	Manipulação de oócitos inclusos em folículos ovarianos pré-antrais
n:	Número de amostras
ng:	Nanograma
SFB:	Soro fetal bovino
TCM 199:	<i>Tissue culture medium</i> 199 (Meio de cultivo de tecido 199)
TO:	Transportador de oócitos
TUNEL:	Terminal deoxynucleotidil transferase-mediated dUTP nick end-labeling



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## 1. Introdução

A realização de pesquisas em biotecnologias reprodutivas como a maturação *in vitro* (MIV), a fecundação *in vitro* (FIV) e o cultivo de embriões *in vitro* (CIV) são conduzidas em ovinos e caprinos na tentativa de viabilizar comercialmente a produção *in vitro* de embriões em larga escala, bem como elucidar a fisiologia reprodutiva nestas espécies. Sendo assim, a biotécnica de Manipulação de Oócitos Inclusos em Folículos Ovarianos Pré-antrais (MOIFOPA), que tem como objetivo principal recuperar folículos pré-antrais do ambiente ovariano para o posterior cultivo *in vitro* até o estágio de maturação, surge como uma alternativa viável a fim de promover a alta produção de embriões.

No entanto, um fator limitante para o sucesso desta biotécnica consiste na manutenção da qualidade folicular após a coleta e transporte dos ovários, uma vez que, na maioria das vezes, as fêmeas doadoras, particularmente no caso das cabras e ovelhas, encontram-se distantes dos laboratórios especializados. Assim, o desenvolvimento de protocolos de conservação de folículos pré-antrais nessas espécies é muito importante para o sucesso da criopreservação e/ou cultivo folicular *in vitro*. Na tentativa de otimizar as condições de conservação *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais, vários meios têm sido testados em diferentes temperaturas e tempos de preservação, merecendo destaque o Meio Essencial Mínimo (MEM), que manteve a sobrevivência e promoveu um aumento do diâmetro de folículos pré-antrais caprinos após conservação e cultivo *in vitro* (CHAVES *et al.*, 2008).

Além disso, uma alternativa recente que vem sendo utilizada em trabalhos a campo é o transporte de complexo cúmulus oócitos (CCOs) bovinos em um transportador de oócitos® 12 – Compact (TO) a fim de manter uma temperatura constante e precisa para a realização da maturação *in vitro*. Entretanto, o TO ainda não foi utilizado para o transporte de folículos pré-antrais de caprinos e ovinos, o que poderia ser uma alternativa para melhorar a eficiência da conservação.

Nas seções seguintes, será abordada uma revisão de literatura evidenciando aspectos relacionados à oogênese e foliculogênese, população folicular e atresia folicular, aspectos relevantes sobre conservação ovariana e folicular, bem como o cultivo *in vitro* de folículos ovarianos.

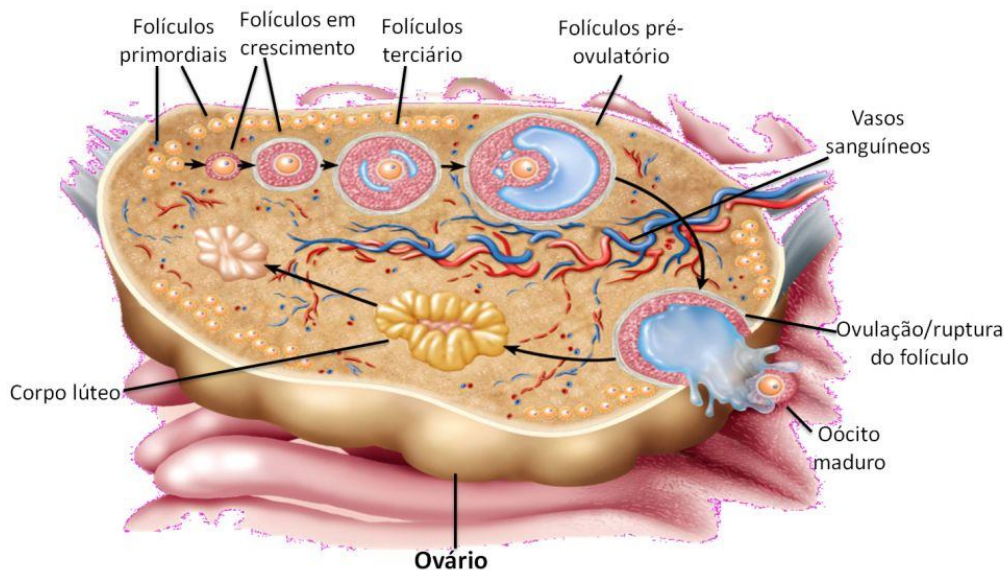
## 2. Revisão de Literatura

### 2.1. Oogênese e foliculogênese inicial

As células germinativas são especializadas em transmitir o genoma às próximas gerações. Nas fêmeas mamíferas, um complexo mecanismo intercelular está envolvido na regulação da oogênese (BRISTOL-GOULD & WOODRUFF, 2006). Em ruminantes, a oogênese consiste na formação e diferenciação das células germinativas primordiais (CGP) até a formação do oócito haplóide fecundado (BRISTOL-GOULD & WOODRUFF, 2006). Os oócitos são originados a partir das células germinativas primordiais (CGP) do endoderma do saco vitelínico, que migram por movimento amebóide até a região das gônadas primitivas (CORTVRINDT & SMITZ, 2001). Após um processo marcado pelo crescimento celular e pela redistribuição de organelas citoplasmáticas, as CGP dentro do ovário multiplicam-se ativamente e transformam-se em oogônias, as quais possuem alta atividade mitótica e transcricional (EPPIG et al., 2004). Em seguida, as oogônias sofrem meiose e se transformam em oócitos primários (ERICKSON, 1966), que iniciam a primeira divisão meiótica, passando pelos estádios da prófase I (leptóteno, zigóteno, paquíteno e diplóteno) (VAN DEN HURK & ZHAO, 2005). No estágio de diplóteno ou vesícula germinativa da prófase I, ocorre a primeira interrupção da divisão meiótica e formação dos oócitos primários, que permanecem neste estágio até a puberdade (SUH et al., 2002). Os oócitos primários são circundados por uma camada de células somáticas pavimentosas, conhecidas como células da pré-granulosa, formando os folículos primordiais (RÜSSE, 1983).

Desta forma, a foliculogênese inicia com o recrutamento dos folículos primordiais para o *pool* de folículos em crescimento e termina com o folículo de De Graaf ou pré-ovulatório (VAN DEN HURK & ZHAO, 2005) e consequente ovulação ou morte folicular (atresia) (WILLIAMS e ERICKSON, 2012). O processo de foliculogênese ocorre no interior do córtex do ovário em todos os mamíferos (Figura. 1) (WILLIAMS e ERICKSON, 2012), exceto em equídeos (HAFEZ, 2004). De acordo com o grau de evolução, os folículos podem ser divididos em: 1) folículos pré-antrais ou não cavitários, que abrangem os folículos primordiais, transição, primários e

secundários e 2) folículos antrais ou cavitários, compreendendo os folículos terciários, de De Graaf ou pré-ovulatório (SILVA et al., 2004).



**Figura 1.** Esquema ilustrativo do ovário mamífero, destacando os folículos ovarianos em diferentes estágios de desenvolvimento.

É importante destacar que os gametas femininos são estocados no ovário principalmente na forma de folículos primordiais. Após a formação dos folículos primordiais, as células da pré-granulosa param de se multiplicar e entram num período de quiescência (VAN DEN HURK e ZHAO, 2005). O início do crescimento folicular, também chamado de ativação, inicia com a mudança na morfologia das células da granulosa de pavimentosas para cúbicas, formando o folículo de transição (contendo células com morfologia pavimentosa e cúbica) (SILVA et al., 2004), e em seguida, o folículo primário (contendo apenas células cúbicas) (BRAW-TAL e YOSSEFI, 1997). Além disso, ocorre a retomada da proliferação das células da granulosa, seguida do aumento do diâmetro oocitário (VAN DEN HURK e ZHAO, 2005). Os fatores e mecanismos responsáveis pelo início do crescimento dos folículos primordiais ainda não são totalmente conhecidos. Alguns autores têm sugerido que fatores endócrinos e parácrinos podem influenciar este crescimento (HIRSHFIELD, 1991; NAYUDU et al., 2001).

A multiplicação das células da granulosa dos folículos primários leva à formação de várias camadas de células da granulosa ao redor do oócito, formando os folículos secundários. Nessa fase, inicia-se a formação das células da teca

externa a partir do estroma intersticial (VAN DEN HURK e ZHAO, 2005). As células da teca interna são definidas quando os folículos apresentam 4 ou mais camadas de células da granulosa (LUCCI et al., 2001). Estudos têm demonstrado que o crescimento de folículos primários é estimulado por vários fatores, como o fator de crescimento e diferenciação-9 (GDF-9 - MARTINS et al., 2008) e a proteína morfogenética do osso-15 (BMP-15 - CELESTINO et al., 2011).

Com o crescimento dos folículos secundários e organização das células da granulosa em várias camadas, forma-se uma cavidade repleta de líquido folicular, entre as camadas de células granulosas, denominada antro. A partir deste estágio, os folículos passam a ser denominados antrais.

## **2.2. População e atresia folicular**

A população folicular é estabelecida ainda na vida fetal (em primatas e ruminantes – BETTERIDGE et al., 1989) ou em um curto período de tempo após o nascimento (em roedores – HIRSHFIELD, 1991). Esta população difere entre as espécies, além de ser observada uma forte variação individual (KATSKA-KSIAZKIEWICZ, 2006), sendo de aproximadamente 1.500 no camundongo fêmea (SHAW et al., 2000), 35.000 na cabra (LUCCI et al., 1999), 160.000 na ovelha (DRIANCOURT et al., 1991), 114.000 na gata doméstica (LIMA et al., 2006), 235.000 em vacas (BETTERIDGE et al., 1989) e aproximadamente 2.000.000 na mulher (ERICKSON, 1986). Vale ressaltar que o ovário mamífero é um órgão extremamente dinâmico, no qual a maioria dos folículos é efetivamente eliminada durante a vida reprodutiva (MATSUDA et al., 2012). Desta, forma, apesar deste grande número de folículos presentes no ovário, a quase totalidade dos folículos, ou seja, 99,9%, não chega à ovulação, mas morre por um processo natural denominado atresia, o qual pode ocorrer por via apoptótica ou pelo processo degenerativo de necrose (MARKSTRÖM et al., 2002).

A atresia, apesar de causar a perda de vários folículos, é um evento crucial para manutenção da homeostase ovariana em mamíferos, assegurando a ciclicidade dos animais e prevenindo o desenvolvimento de múltiplos embriões durante a gestação (AMSTERDAM et al., 2003). A atresia é um fenômeno natural que é comum a todas as espécies domésticas, podendo ocorrer em qualquer estágio do

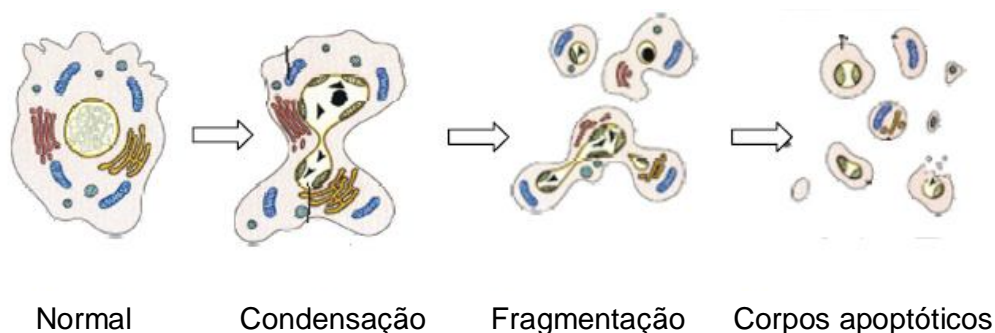
desenvolvimento folicular, sendo mais comum nos estádios antrais mais avançados (GLAMOCLIJIA et al., 2005).

O processo de atresia usualmente difere entre folículos pré-antrais e antrais. Em folículos pré-antrais, as primeiras alterações indicativas de atresia ocorrem no oócito, destacando-se a retração da cromatina nuclear e a fragmentação oocitária (MORITA & TILLY, 1999). Após a formação da cavidade antral, o oócito torna-se resistente e as primeiras alterações indicativas de atresia são observadas nas células da granulosa (JORIO et al., 1991). A seguir, serão descritos, resumidamente, os mecanismos de atresia em folículos ovarianos através da apoptose e da necrose.

### **2.2.1. Apoptose**

A apoptose também conhecida como morte celular programada é um processo determinado geneticamente, ou seja, depende da expressão de genes pró e anti-apoptóticos. Este processo tem como característica marcante, a fragmentação do DNA a cada 180 a 200 pares de base (HUSSEIN, 2005). Além disso, a apoptose é geralmente mediada por mecanismos intrínsecos, podendo também ser influenciada por fatores extrínsecos (JOHSTONE et al., 2002). Dentre os fatores que podem levar a apoptose destaca-se o estresse oxidativo, irradiação, ativação de genes promotores de apoptose, citocinas, proteínas virais e a deficiência de fatores de sobrevivência da célula (JOHNSON, 2003).

A apoptose é caracterizada por uma série de alterações bioquímicas e morfológicas, com a extensiva perda de volume celular, a condensação da cromatina, a fragmentação do DNA e a formação de corpos apoptóticos (Fig. 2) (RACHID et al., 2000). Em seguida, os corpos apoptóticos são fagocitados pelas células vizinhas, sem ocorrer processo inflamatório. Durante todo o processo, a permeabilidade celular permanece inalterada, e as organelas mantêm sua integridade morfofuncional (RACHID et al., 2000).



**Figura 2.** Ilustração de vários estádios de morte celular por apoptose. Representação de mudanças estereóticas incluindo condensação, mudanças na estrutura nuclear e fragmentação da célula em pequenos corpos apoptóticos. Adaptado de PADANILAM, 2003.

### 2.2.2. Necrose

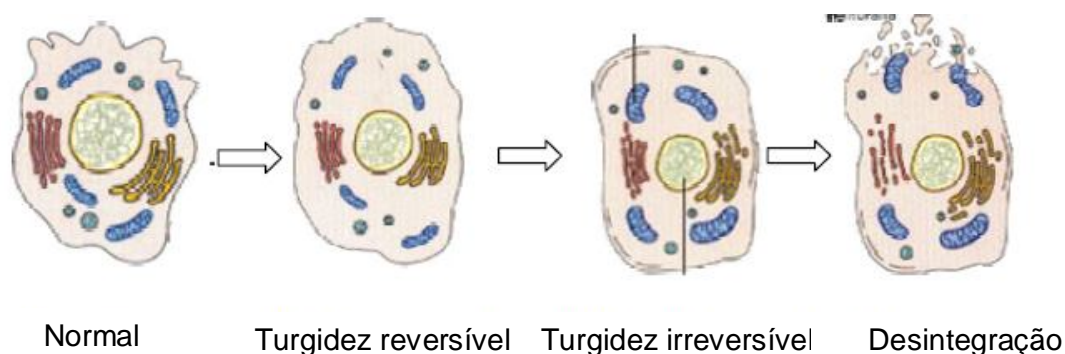
No que se refere ao processo degenerativo de necrose, esta, diferentemente da apoptose, é considerada uma forma não programada de morte celular e é iniciada devido a algum estímulo circunstancial resultando na rápida quebra da homeostasia celular (BRAS et al., 2005).

A necrose comumente ocorre devido a estímulos tóxicos, isquêmicos, degenerativos e imunológicos, podendo tais fatores também induzir a apoptose. Além disso, alguns estímulos que levam a ocorrência de apoptose podem em certas circunstâncias (como depleção de energia ou redução da ativação das caspases) induzir o fenômeno da necrose (ZEISS, 2003). Geralmente, a necrose é iniciada por mecanismos não celulares como isquemia, deficiência de níveis de ATP (BHATIA, 2004), trauma, levando a danos irreversíveis na célula (McCULLY et al., 2004). Recentes trabalhos têm sugerido que além dessas causas, mecanismos “ativos” como uma sobrecarga de  $\text{Na}^+$ , acúmulo de  $\text{Ca}^{+2}$  e mudanças na permeabilidade da mitocôndria podem também participar e levar ao processo necrótico (PADANILAM, 2003).

Em condições *in vitro*, especialmente durante a conservação, ocorre alteração no fornecimento de oxigênio e nutrientes para o ovário. Nesta situação, a isquemia pode ser uma das principais causas do desencadeamento da morte folicular por degeneração (FARBER, 1982), resultando em alterações na permeabilidade da membrana celular. Essas alterações podem levar ao aumento de água intracelular e

do volume celular, vacuolização citoplasmática e, conseqüentemente, degeneração (BARROS et al., 2001).

A morfologia de uma célula que sofreu necrose é bem distinta de uma célula que sofreu apoptose, com mudanças ultra-estruturais ocorrendo tanto no citoplasma quanto no núcleo (SCAFFIDI et al., 2002). As principais características são: turgidez e completa degeneração do citoplasma e da matriz mitocondrial, rompimento da membrana plasmática, e eventual extravasamento do conteúdo citoplasmático dentro do espaço extracelular (NEWTON e ILLINGWORTH, 2001).



**Figura 3.** Ilustração de vários estádios de morte celular por necrose. Representação de mudanças estereóticas incluindo aumento de volume celular, degeneração citoplasmática, desintegração das organelas e membrana. Adaptado de SLOT, 2004.

### 2.3. Importâncias e aplicações da biotecnologia reprodutiva de MOIFOPA

A manipulação de oócitos inclusos em folículos ovarianos pré-antrais (MOIFOPA) ou ovário artificial é uma biotécnica da reprodução que vem sendo aprimorada nos últimos tempos e consiste numa das principais ferramentas utilizadas atualmente para a elucidação da foliculogênese inicial. Tal biotécnica tem como principal objetivo resgatar oócitos oriundos de folículos pré-antrais, a partir do ambiente ovariano, e posteriormente cultivá-los *in vitro* até a maturação, prevenindo assim o fenômeno da atresia ou morte folicular e possibilitando sua utilização em outras biotécnicas como FIV, transgênese e clonagem. Para alcançar esse objetivo, é necessário o aprimoramento dos protocolos de conservação existentes, bem como



um sistema de cultivo *in vitro* ideal que permita o desenvolvimento folicular, mantendo a sua viabilidade.

O armazenamento temporário dos ovários durante o transporte até os laboratórios especializados em biotécnicas da reprodução pode propiciar a recuperação de oócitos de espécies ameaçadas de extinção, que muitas vezes, morrem subitamente no campo, ou a recuperação de ovários de animais ovariectomizados por razões médicas (NAOI et al., 2007). Diversos estudos estão sendo conduzidos na busca de alternativas ideais que preservem ao máximo a viabilidade de oócitos durante o transporte, uma vez que a qualidade destes é um fator determinante no desenvolvimento inicial do embrião (RIZOS et al., 2002).

#### **2.4. Conservação de tecido ovariano**

Diante da importância da etapa de conservação de folículos ovarianos pré-antrais, nos subtópicos a seguir serão abordados aspectos relacionados à importância da conservação de tecido ovariano e os métodos utilizados para essa finalidade, fatores que afetam a viabilidade oocitária e folicular durante a conservação *in vitro*, bem como a importância do meio e o tempo de conservação para a manutenção da sobrevivência folicular.

##### **2.4.1. Métodos utilizados para auxiliar o transporte e/ou a conservação de ovários**

Há vários métodos de transporte e/ou conservação de ovário e, muitas vezes, a escolha do método depende do tamanho do órgão, do tecido ovariano ou das células a serem transportadas. Por exemplo, para o transporte de ovários, complexos cúmulos-oócito (CCOs) ou folículos, pode-se utilizar tubos de ensaio de vidro ou poliestireno, mantidos em banho-maria à 36-39°C (OLIVIER et al., 1998) ou em caixas térmicas em diferentes temperaturas (CHAVES et al., 2008), placas de cultivo acondicionadas em bolsas plásticas seladas (PALMA et al., 1998), palhetas de 0,25 mL, criotubos em estufas portáteis (KAISER et al., 1999; BYRD et al., 1995; SUZUKI et al., 1997) ou em um transportador de oócitos (Fig. 4; BARROS, 2010; GONÇALVES et al., 2011).



**Figura 4:** Transportador de oócitos® 12 – Compact (Wtvet-Brasil).

#### **2.4.2. Fatores que afetam a sobrevivência folicular e oocitária durante a conservação *in vitro***

Uma vez coletado os ovários e durante o transporte dos mesmos, o fluxo de sangue para este órgão é interrompido e os folículos sofrem isquemia. Numerosos estudos têm mostrado que esta condição isquêmica pode levar a mudanças adversas nos folículos, incluindo a falta de oxigênio, diminuição da concentração de glicose e aumento do índice de apoptose em células da granulosa (PEDERSEN et al., 2004; WONGSRIKEAO et al., 2005; SAKAMOTO et al., 2006).

A fim de tentar minimizar os danos causados aos folículos, além da redução do tempo de transporte dos ovários, outra estratégia que tem sido muito utilizada é a diminuição da temperatura, pois assim o metabolismo celular também é reduzido e as células sofrem menos os efeitos provocados pela isquemia (CELESTINO et al., 2007; CHAVES et al., 2008). Porém, esta temperatura deve ser adequada, pois segundo Wang (2011), acredita-se que o citoplasma e os núcleos dos oócitos são sensíveis tanto ao calor quanto ao frio em excesso.

A solução de conservação utilizada no transporte folicular também exerce um papel fundamental na minimização dos efeitos nocivos durante o armazenamento (BIGAM e GRANT, 2000). Vários estudos têm sido realizados a fim de avaliar a eficiência de diferentes soluções na manutenção da sobrevivência oocitária e folicular. Alguns dos meios utilizados foram o tampão fosfato salino (PBS) (SANTOS et al., 2001), a solução salina 0,9%, a solução Braun-Collins (SILVA et al., 2000; CARVALHO et al., 2001), a solução à base de água de coco (SILVA et al., 2000) e o meio essencial mínimo (MEM – CHAVES et al., 2008). A solução salina 0,9% é

isomótica, de baixo custo e, embora seja pobre em nutrientes, pois é composta apenas por água e sais, vem sendo muito utilizada como meio de conservação durante o transporte por curto período de tempo (1 h no máximo) de ovários ovinos (AMORIM et al., 2003), caprinos (LUCCI et al., 2007), bovinos (SOLANO et al., 1994) e de lhamas (DEL CAMPO, 1995). Já a solução à base de água de coco é um meio rico em nutrientes, que vem sendo utilizado com sucesso na preservação de sêmen de caprinos (NUNES et al., 1999) e suínos (TONIOLLI et al., 1998). Além disso, o meio de cultivo de tecido 199 (*Tissue Culture Medium* 199 - TCM 199) é rico em nutrientes, como glicose, vitaminas e aminoácidos (MIGLIORISI et al., 1987) e tem sido utilizado com sucesso na preservação de CCOs bovinos (TWAGIRAMUNGU et al., 1998) durante o transporte até o laboratório.

#### **2.4.3. Principais resultados com a conservação *in vitro* de tecido ovariano de ruminantes**

Diversos trabalhos têm testado qual o melhor meio, temperatura, tempo e método para manter os oócitos viáveis após o transporte dos ovários do local de coleta até o laboratório. É importante ressaltar que, na maioria desses estudos envolvendo conservação de tecido ovariano, os ovários foram transportados de forma fragmentada.

Alguns autores mostraram que a conservação de pequenos fragmentos ovarianos caprinos em baixas temperaturas (4°C) manteve a porcentagem de folículos morfologicamente normais similar àquela observada no tecido controle por até 24 h. Esses resultados foram observados após conservação tanto em soluções pobres (solução salina 0,9% - COSTA et al., 2005) ou ricas em nutrientes, como o TCM199 (FERREIRA et al., 2001), solução à base de água de coco e solução Braun Collins (SILVA et al., 2000). Chaves et al. (2008) demonstraram que a conservação de pequenos fragmentos ovarianos caprinos em MEM a 4°C por até 4 h é eficiente para manter a viabilidade folicular após o cultivo *in vitro* desses fragmentos. Sugere-se que a redução do metabolismo possa proteger os folículos contra os prováveis efeitos nocivos das baixas temperaturas. Em temperaturas mais elevadas, foi possível manter folículos normais após conservação de fragmentos ovarianos caprinos a 20°C por até 4 h na solução à base de água de coco (SILVA et al., 2000;

COSTA et al., 2005) e em TCM199 sozinho (COSTA et al., 2005) ou adicionado de Ácido 3-Indol Acético (FERREIRA et al., 2001).

Para a espécie ovina, a sobrevivência dos folículos pré-antrais também foi mantida à temperatura de 4°C por até 24 h em solução salina 0,9%, solução à base de água de coco (ANDRADE et al., 2002) e TCM199 (MATOS et al., 2004). Igualmente, a porcentagem de folículos pré-antrais normais equivalente ao controle foi preservada após a conservação de fragmentos ovarianos ovinos a 20°C por 4 h em PBS (SANTOS et al., 2001) e nas soluções salina 0,9% e Braun-Collins (ANDRADE et al., 2001; ANDRADE et al., 2002), além de 20°C por 12 h na solução à base de água de coco (ANDRADE et al., 2002), bem como em TCM199 (MATOS et al., 2004). Esses resultados demonstram que à medida que se aumenta a temperatura, a composição do meio de conservação parece ser importante para promover a manutenção da integridade folicular.

Especificamente em relação à espécie bovina, estudos demonstraram que a conservação de fragmentos ovarianos a 4°C por até 18 h em solução salina ou solução à base de água de coco (LUCCI et al., 2004) ou por 24 h em TCM 199 (CELESTINO et al., 2007), manteve a porcentagem de folículos pré-antrais normais equivalente a de folículos do controle. Estes autores mostraram ainda que folículos pré-antrais bovinos podem ser conservados eficientemente a 20°C por 4, 6 e 12 h em solução salina 0,9%, solução à base de água de coco e TCM 199, respectivamente. Matsushita et al. (2004) também observaram que ovários bovinos podem ser armazenados em solução salina 0,9% em baixas temperaturas (10°C) por 24 h sem afetar negativamente a maturação oocitária ou o potencial de desenvolvimento embrionário. Outros autores avaliaram o efeito da conservação de ovários bovinos em solução salina 0,9% em diferentes temperaturas (15°, 25° e 35° C) por um período de tempo de 3-4 horas sobre o desenvolvimento de oócitos utilizados para transferência nuclear de células somáticas. Os resultados mostraram que aqueles ovários armazenados a 35°C obtiveram reduzida taxa de recuperação de oócitos grau I e grau II e reduzida proporção de oócitos maturados *in vitro* quando comparado com as demais temperaturas. Além disso, os oócitos provenientes de ovários conservados a 15°C produziram blastocistos com maior número de células e menor taxa de apoptose, quando comparado aos oócitos armazenados em temperaturas de 25 ou 35°C. Dessa forma, eles concluíram que o armazenamento dos ovários à 15°C por um período de 3-4 h tem efeito benéfico na qualidade e

competência de oócitos usados para a transferência nuclear de células somáticas (WANG et al., 2011).

Por outro lado, a conservação de tecido ovariano caprino, ovino e bovino em temperatura fisiológica (39°C) não tem apresentado bons resultados independente do meio utilizado. Após análise histológica dos fragmentos ovarianos, vários estudos relataram que a conservação a 39°C aumentava significativamente a atresia folicular, comparada ao controle (SILVA et al., 2000; FERREIRA et al., 2001; ANDRADE et al., 2002). Vale ressaltar que em períodos de conservação inferiores, ou seja, apenas 2 h, MATOS et al. (2004) conseguiram preservar folículos primordiais ovinos à temperatura de 39°C em solução salina 0,9% e TCM199. Entretanto, esses autores não realizaram outra técnica, como o cultivo *in vitro*, para confirmar a viabilidade folicular após conservação.

A tabela 1 resume os principais achados referentes à conservação de tecido ovariano de ruminantes.

**Tabela 1:** Resultados satisfatórios obtidos após conservação *in vitro* de tecido ovariano de ruminantes em diferentes meios, temperaturas e tempos.

<b>Espécie</b>	<b>Meio</b>	<b>Temperatura (°C)</b>	<b>Tempo (h)</b>	<b>Referência</b>
<b>Ovina</b>	Solução salina 0,9%	4	24	ANDRADE <i>et al.</i> , 2002
	Solução de água de coco			
	TCM199	4	24	MATOS <i>et al.</i> , 2004
	Solução de água de coco	20	12	ANDRADE <i>et al.</i> , 2002
	TCM199	20	12	MATOS <i>et al.</i> , 2004
	TCM199	39	2	MATOS <i>et al.</i> , 2004
<b>Caprina</b>	Solução salina 0,9%	4	24	COSTA <i>et al.</i> , 2005
	TCM199	4	24	FERREIRA <i>et al.</i> , 2001
	Solução de água de coco	4	24	SILVA <i>et al.</i> , 2000
	Solução Braun Collins			
	Solução de água de coco	20	4	COSTA <i>et al.</i> , 2005
	TCM199	20	4	COSTA <i>et al.</i> , 2005
	TCM199 + IAA	20	4	FERREIRA <i>et al.</i> , 2001
<b>Bovina</b>	TCM199	4	24	CELESTINO <i>et al.</i> , 2007
	Solução salina 0,9%	15	3-4	WANG <i>et al.</i> , 2011
	Solução salina 0,9%	10	24	MATSUSHITA <i>et al.</i> 2004
	TCM199	20	12	CELESTINO <i>et al.</i> , 2007

## 2.5. Cultivo *in vitro* de folículos ovarianos

O objetivo principal do cultivo *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais é permitir o desenvolvimento folicular, assegurando o crescimento e maturação dos oócitos, bem como a multiplicação e posterior diferenciação das células da granulosa inclusas nesses folículos (FIGUEIREDO et al., 2003). O cultivo de ovários tem sido utilizado para avaliar a importância da vascularização (FORTUNE et al., 2000), apoptose (FLAWS et al., 2001) e fatores de crescimento (ERICKSON, 2001) para o desenvolvimento de folículos pré-antrais, especialmente os primordiais (O'BRIEN et al., 2003).

O cultivo de pequenos fragmentos de córtex ovariano, rico em folículos primordiais, tem sido realizado para o estudo da ativação e crescimento de folículos primordiais caprinos (SILVA et al., 2004a), bovinos (BRAW-TAL e YOSSEFI, 1997) e humanos (SCOTT et al., 2004). O cultivo de pequenos fragmentos de córtex ovariano tem a vantagem de manter a integridade estrutural folicular e as interações entre as células foliculares e células do estroma, facilitando a perfusão do meio para o tecido ovariano (TELFER, 1996).

Vários estudos sobre cultivo *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais têm sido realizados em diferentes espécies animais. Em gatas (JEWGENOW e STOLTE, 1996) e macacas (FORTUNE et al., 1998), já foi observado o crescimento de folículos pré-antrais isolados após o cultivo *in vitro*, porém sem a formação de antro. Nas espécies bovina (GUTIERREZ et al., 2000) e humana (ROY e TREACY, 1993), folículos pré-antrais isolados foram cultivados *in vitro* e se desenvolveram até o estágio antral. Em caprinos e ovinos, folículos secundários crescidos *in vitro* chegaram até a ovulação e tiveram seus oócitos fecundados *in vitro*, alcançando o estágio de mórula (MAGALHÃES et al., 2011; ARUNAKUMARI et al., 2010). Já em suínos e bubalinos, esse desenvolvimento alcançou o estágio de blastocisto (WU et al., 2001; GUPTA et al., 2008). Apesar do grande avanço no cultivo *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais com as referidas espécies, os resultados mais satisfatórios têm sido observados em animais de laboratório. Carroll et al., (1990) obtiveram o nascimento de camundongos *in vitro* após criopreservação e posterior descongelamento, crescimento, maturação e fecundação *in vitro* de oócitos oriundos de folículos primários. Entretanto, o rendimento referente à produção de oócitos

maturos a partir de folículos pré-antrais é extremamente baixo e variável devido à inadequação na fase de conservação ovariana e dos meios de cultivo disponíveis.

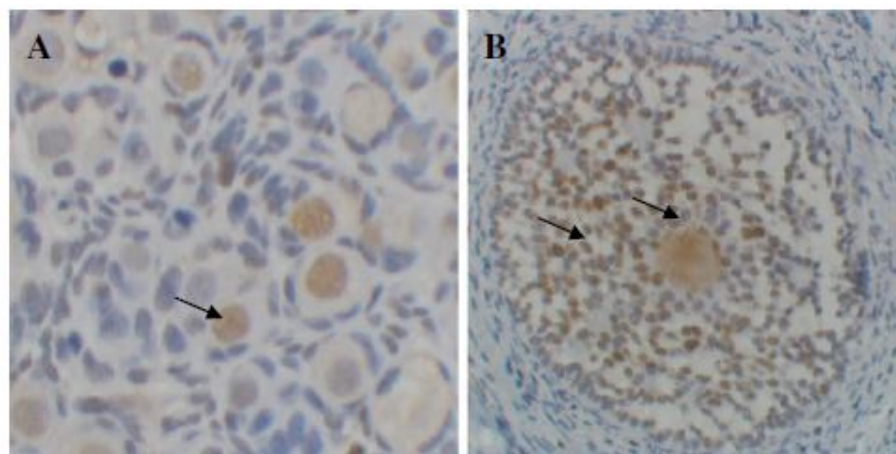
## **2.6. Técnicas utilizadas para avaliar a sobrevivência folicular após conservação e cultivo *in vitro***

Após conservação e cultivo *in vitro* dos folículos ovarianos, faz-se necessário o emprego de técnicas específicas que possam avaliar a morfologia e a viabilidade dessas células. Diversas técnicas estão disponíveis e vem sendo utilizadas, tais como a histologia clássica, a microscopia eletrônica de transmissão, a avaliação da apoptose através do TUNEL, os corantes como por exemplo o azul de trypan, dentre outras.

A histologia é uma técnica muito utilizada, que permite verificar a morfologia do oócito, células da granulosa, células da teca e do estroma. Uma vantagem desta técnica é a possibilidade de avaliar um grande número de folículos, tornando-se importante para uma análise quantitativa (MATOS et al., 2004). As colorações mais comumente empregadas são: hematoxilina-eosina (HE) (NILSSON e SKINNER, 2002) e Ácido Periódico de Schiff-hematoxilina (PAS-hematoxilina) (CHAVES et al., 2008). Porém, através da histologia não é possível, por exemplo, avaliar a integridade das organelas citoplasmáticas.

Outra técnica utilizada para avaliar a fragmentação de DNA após conservação e cultivo de tecido ovariano é a técnica de TUNEL (terminal deoxynucleotidil transferase-mediated dUTP nick end-labeling). A técnica de TUNEL detecta danos endógenos no DNA e tem sido considerada um método adequado para quantificar as quebras no DNA e determinar o grau de apoptose de diferentes tipos celulares tais como: espermatozoides (YOUNG et al., 2003), oócitos (WANG et al., 2011) e folículos ovarianos (PENG et al., 2010). A avaliação de TUNEL se baseia na incubação das células com a reação de mistura TUNEL contendo a enzima terminal desoxinucleotideo-transferase com a finalidade de marcar as extremidades 3'-OH do DNA fragmentado no processo de apoptose. Essa enzima irá catalisar a reação polimerizando os nucleotídeos modificados nas regiões de fragmentação do DNA. Após a incubação, um anticorpo específico é incorporado à enzima e, então, a ligação (enzima-anticorpo) é amplificada por várias reações enzimáticas secundárias e visualizada por microscopia ótica. As células examinadas

microscopicamente são identificadas como TUNEL positivas ou imunopositivas (DNA fragmentado) devido à presença de coloração marrom determinada pela ação da diaminobenzidina, ou negativo (DNA íntegro), de acordo com a presença de coloração azul determinada pela contracoloração com hematoxilina (MARTINS et al., 2007). A figura 5 ilustra um exemplo de visualização de apoptose em folículos ovarianos através da técnica de TUNEL.



**Figura 5:** Detecção de apoptose (setas) utilizando a técnica de TUNEL nos diferentes tipos de células foliculares. (A) Apoptose em oócitos de folículos primordiais (B) Apoptose no oócito e nas células da granulosa de folículo terciário. Fonte: PENG et al., 2010.

Além das técnicas citadas acima, uma das principais maneiras de se verificar a qualidade dos oócitos após conservação e/ou transporte dos ovários até o laboratório é através do cultivo *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais (CHAVES et al., 2008), MIV (EVECEN et al., 2009) e/ou FIV (WANG et al., 2011). Com esta técnica, pode-se verificar se os folículos têm capacidade de se manterem viáveis e de se desenvolverem após a conservação *in vitro*. Desta forma, os ovários obtidos de animais de abatedouro poderiam ser utilizados para recuperação de oócitos para FIV e posterior produção *in vitro* de embriões.

Diante do exposto percebe-se a importância das técnicas de avaliação, pois estas contribuem para a melhoria dos sistemas de conservação *in vitro*, e a utilização dessas técnicas permite uma maior precisão na análise da qualidade folicular (MATOS, 2007).



### 3. Justificativa

A região Semiárida do Vale do São Francisco, com destaque para o Estado de Pernambuco, apresenta-se como uma região atrativa para se desenvolver o Arranjo Produtivo Local (APL) da Ovinocaprinocultura. Como este APL exerce um importante papel sócio-econômico, o desenvolvimento de biotécnicas que possibilitem uma rápida multiplicação de animais geneticamente superiores pode melhorar significativamente a qualidade de vida da população rural da região Semiárida do Nordeste Brasileiro.

Nesse sentido, a compreensão da fisiologia ovariana em caprinos e ovinos, associada ao desenvolvimento de biotécnicas na área da reprodução animal, como por exemplo, a conservação e o posterior cultivo *in vitro* de oócitos inclusos em folículos pré-antrais, abrem inúmeras possibilidades para proporcionar um melhoramento genético dos rebanhos e um aumento na produtividade animal. Nesse contexto, a conservação *in situ* de folículos pré-antrais representa uma valiosa fonte para o fornecimento de oócitos normais, que podem ser destinados à criopreservação e/ou cultivo *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais, ou no futuro, para a produção *in vitro* de embriões (TELFER *et al.*, 2001). Entretanto, o crescimento e o desenvolvimento oocitário dependem da sobrevivência e manutenção da qualidade, tanto do oócito, como das células da granulosa, durante o processo de conservação *in situ*.

Estudos demonstraram que folículos pré-antrais caprinos e ovinos foram conservados à 4, 20 e 39°C por até 24, 12 e 2 h em solução salina 0,9% ou no meio TCM 199 (MATOS *et al.*, 2004; COSTA *et al.*, 2005). Porém, esses trabalhos não realizaram um posterior cultivo *in vitro* após o período de conservação para comprovar a viabilidade desses folículos e sua habilidade para crescer *in vitro*. Em um trabalho realizado em caprinos, Chaves *et al.* (2008) conservaram tecido ovariano a 4°C, obtendo uma taxa de sobrevivência semelhante ao controle após 7 dias de cultivo, no entanto em um curto período de conservação (4 h). Além disso, embora os resultados não tenham sido muito favoráveis quando folículos pré-antrais foram conservados em temperaturas próximas da fisiológica (35-39°C), a maioria dos trabalhos de MIV, utilizam essas temperaturas para o transporte dos ovários (SHIRAZY *et al.*, 2009; WAN *et al.*, 2009).

Por outro lado, uma alternativa recente que vem sendo utilizada em trabalhos a campo é o transporte de CCOs bovinos em um transportador de oócitos 12 – Compact® (TO) a fim de manter uma temperatura constante e precisa para a realização da maturação *in vitro*. Entretanto, o TO ainda não foi utilizado para o transporte de folículos pré-antrais caprinos e ovinos, o que poderia ser uma alternativa para melhorar a eficiência da conservação.

Dessa forma, torna-se necessário o aprimoramento dos protocolos existentes para conservação de folículos pré-antrais caprinos e ovinos ou o desenvolvimento de novos protocolos que permitam a manutenção da sobrevivência folicular, inclusive após o cultivo *in vitro*. Esses protocolos auxiliariam na produção *in vitro* (PIV) de embriões ovinos, visto que para o sucesso dessa técnica, há a necessidade de um suporte adequado aos folículos durante as fases de conservação e crescimento *in vitro*, o que garantirá oócitos de qualidade a serem maturados *in vitro* para a posterior fecundação.

#### **4. Hipótese Científica**

A utilização de diferentes meios e períodos para conservação *in vitro* de tecido ovariano ovino e caprino em um transportador de oócitos à 35°C, pode preservar a morfologia dos folículos pré-antrais, diminuindo a taxa de apoptose e mantendo a posterior capacidade de desenvolvimento folicular após cultivo *in vitro*.

#### **5. Objetivos**

##### **5.1. Objetivo Geral**

Avaliar o efeito de diferentes meios e períodos para conservação *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais ovinos e caprinos utilizando o TO.

##### **5.2. Objetivo Específico**

- Avaliar o efeito da conservação *in vitro* de tecido ovariano ovino e caprino em MEM, adicionado ou não de suplementos, à 35°C por 6 ou 12 h no TO sobre a morfologia, a taxa de apoptose e o posterior crescimento *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais.

## 6. Capítulo 1

### **Effect of transportation conditions of ovaries on the morphology, apoptosis and development of ovine preantral follicle**

R.J.S. Gonçalves<sup>a</sup>, A.Y.P. Cavalcante<sup>a</sup>, B.B. Gouveia<sup>a</sup>, T.LB. Lins<sup>a</sup>, R.S. Barberino<sup>a</sup>, V.G.

Menezes<sup>a</sup>, V.R.P. Barros<sup>a</sup>, T.J.S. Macedo<sup>a</sup>, J.R. Figueiredo<sup>b</sup>, M.H.T. Matos<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup>Nucleus of Biotechnology Applied to Ovarian Follicle Development, Laboratory of Cell Biology, Cytology and Histology, Federal University of San Francisco Valley – UNIVASF, Petrolina, Brazil.

<sup>b</sup>Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Laboratory of Manipulation of Oocyte and Preantral Follicles (LAMOFOPA), State University of Ceara, 60740-000, Fortaleza-CE, Brazil

\*Correspondence should be addressed to:

Curso de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Animal (CPGCA)

Laboratório de Biologia celular, Citologia e Histologia

Universidade Federal do Vale do São Francisco (UNIVASF)

Rodovia BR 407, Km 12, Lote 543 - Projeto de Irrigação Nilo Coelho - S/N, C1

CEP: 56300-000 - Petrolina - PE – Brasil

Tel.: +55.87.2101.4839

Corresponding author: [helena.matos@univasf.edu.br](mailto:helena.matos@univasf.edu.br) (M.H.T. Matos)

## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of ovarian tissue transportation conditions (medium and period of time) on the morphology, apoptosis and development of ovine preantral follicles cultured in vitro. After collecting, each ovarian pair was cut into 13 slices, with one fragment being fixed immediately (fresh control). The remaining ovarian slices were placed individually in cryotubes containing conservation medium (MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup>) and stored at 35°C for 6 or 12 h without (non-cultured) or with a subsequent culture for 1 or 5 d. After each incubation and/or culture period, the fragments were processed to enable routine histological and TUNEL examination. The results showed that preservation of tissues in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup>, independently of the period, resulted in similar percentages ( $P>0.05$ ) of normal follicles to fresh control. Compared to the fresh control, a decrease ( $P<0.05$ ) in follicular survival was observed in tissues cultured for 1 d after 12 h of preservation in both media as well as in those cultured for 5 d. No change in the percentage of primordial or growing follicles was observed between fresh and preserved (non-cultured) tissues ( $P>0.05$ ). In all culture conditions, a decrease in the percentage of primordial follicles was observed concomitant with an increase ( $P<0.05$ ) in the percentage of developing follicles compared to the fresh control and preserved (non-cultured) tissues. Moreover, after 5 d, tissues preserved in MEM for 12 h or in MEM<sup>+</sup> for both periods, increased ( $P<0.05$ ) follicular and oocyte diameters when compared to fresh control and other treatments. TUNEL positive cells increased ( $P<0.05$ ) after 5 d of culture in ovarian tissues preserved in MEM for both periods and in those preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for 12 h when compared to fresh control. The percentage of TUNEL positive cells also increased ( $P<0.05$ ) in follicles cultured for 5 d in MEM<sup>+</sup> after being preserved for 12 h, compared to 6 h. Only for tissues preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for 6 h, the percentage of apoptotic cells was similar among non-cultured tissues and tissues cultured for

1 and 5 d ( $P>0.05$ ). In conclusion, the present study showed, for the first time, that ovine ovarian tissue can be successfully preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> at 35°C for up to 6 h using an oocyte transporter, without affecting their apoptosis rates and their ability to develop in vitro.

**Keywords:** Sheep, Ovary, Conservation, Survival, Activation, Growth

## 1. Introduction

The in vitro growth, maturation and fertilization of oocytes from preantral follicles represents a great potential for assisting in the in vitro production of mammalian embryos. The collection of sperm samples, oocytes and embryos is an aspect of great importance in the development of these technologies [1]. One of the most important problems is the transport of ovaries to the laboratory from long distances [2]. Type of medium used and storage duration of the ovaries as well as temperatures of the medium used during ovarian transportation are among the factors affecting subsequent follicular survival, development and complete maturation.

Techniques for short-term storage of ovaries were already developed for several species, such as ovine [3], caprine [4], bovine [5], swine [6] and equine [7]. Despite differences within species, results were similar for ovine and caprine studies, which have tested the temperatures of 4, 20 and 39°C for the preservation of preantral follicles. In general, the most suitable temperature was 4°C, allowing preservation of preantral follicles for periods as long as 24 h even in simple media such as 0.9% saline solution [8]. Additionally, temperature of 20°C was able to preserve the follicles for only 4 or 12 h, depending on the storage medium used [9,3]. Nevertheless, in vitro preservation of ovine ovarian tissue at 39°C maintained follicular survival for only 2 h [3]. Adversely to those unsatisfactory results described at physiological temperatures, in general for IVM studies, the ovaries or the

cumulus oocyte complexes (COC) are preserved and transported to the laboratory at approximately 30–37°C [1]. Moreover, BYRD [10] have transported ovine oocytes at 39°C in a portable incubator, a type of oocyte transporter, and have observed maturation, fertilization, and developmental rates of oocytes similar to those of oocytes matured in a conventional incubator. However, no studies have been dedicated to evaluate the effect of storage of ovine ovarian tissue in the oocyte transporter. Furthermore, none of the preservation studies evaluated whether transport conditions (temperature, time and medium) of ovine ovaries affected follicular apoptosis and further growth during *in vitro* culture.

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the effect of ovarian tissue transportation conditions (medium and period of time) in the oocyte transporter on the morphology, apoptosis and development of ovine preantral follicles cultured *in vitro*.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Source of ovaries**

Ovine ovaries (n= 10) were obtained at a local slaughterhouse from adult cross-bred sheep (n=5). Immediately after death, the ovaries were washed once in 70% alcohol for 10 s and then twice in Minimum Essential Medium (MEM - Sigma Chemical Co, St Louis, USA) containing HEPES and antibiotics (100 µg/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL streptomycin). Unless otherwise mentioned, culture media, supplements and chemicals used in the present study were purchased from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis, MO, USA). The fragments of ovaries were transported to the laboratory at 35°C using an oocyte transporter12-Compact® (Wtvet, São Paulo, Brazil).

## 2.2. Experimental protocol

After collecting, each ovarian pair was cut into 13 slices approximately 3 mm x 3 mm (1 mm thick). For each animal, one slice of tissue was randomly selected and immediately fixed for histological analysis (fresh control). The remaining slices of ovarian cortex (12 slices) were placed individually in cryotubes containing 2 mL of conservation medium (MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup>) and stored at 35°C for 6 or 12 h without (non-cultured) or with a subsequent culture for 1 or 5 d, as shown in Figure 1. The preservation media were MEM alone (the same used for washing the ovaries) or MEM supplemented with ITS (0.1 mg/mL insulin, 0.055 mg/mL transferrin and 0.5 µg/mL sodium selenite), 2 mM glutamine, 2 mM hypoxanthine, 3 mg/mL BSA, 50 µg/mL ascorbic acid, 50 ng/mL recombinant FSH (Nanocore, São Paulo-Brazil), 100 µg/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL streptomycin. The latter medium was named MEM<sup>+</sup>. The pH of the media was monitored before and after the preservation periods (pHmeter - PG2000, Gehaka, São Paulo, Brazil). After preservation periods, one ovarian slice of each medium, was fixed and destined to histological analyzes, whereas the other slices, were cultured individually in 1 mL of culture medium in 24-well culture dishes for 1 or 5 d; the culture conditions were 39 °C in an atmosphere of 5% CO<sub>2</sub> in air. The basic culture medium consisted of  $\alpha$ -MEM (pH 7.2–7.4; GIBCO, New York, USA) supplemented with ITS (0.1 mg/mL insulin, 0.055 mg/mL transferrin and 0.5 µg/mL sodium selenite), 0.23 mM pyruvate, 2 mM glutamine, 2 mM hypoxanthine, 1.25 mg/mL BSA, 50 µg/mL ascorbic acid, 50 ng/mL rFSH (Nanocore, São Paulo, Brazil), 100 µg/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL streptomycin. This medium was chosen based on a previous study [11]. Each treatment was repeated five times, thus using the ovaries of five different animals. The culture medium was stabilized at 39 °C for 2 h prior to use and was replenished every second day.



### **2.3. Morphological analysis and assessment of in vitro follicular growth**

Tissues from all treatments (fresh control, preserved for 6 or 12 h or preserved and then cultured for 1 or 5 d) were fixed in 4% buffered formaldehyde (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) for 18 h and then dehydrated in increasing concentrations of ethanol (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil). After paraffin embedding (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil), the ovine tissue pieces were cut into 5 µm sections, and every section was mounted on glass slides and stained by Periodic Acid Schiff hematoxylin (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil). Follicle stage and survival were examined by microscopy (Nikon, Japan) at X 400 magnification.

The developmental stages of preantral follicles have been defined previously as follows [12]: primordial (one layer of flattened granulosa cells around the oocyte) or growing follicles (intermediate: one layer of flattened to cuboidal granulosa cells; primary: one layer of cuboidal granulosa cells, and secondary: two or more layers of cuboidal granulosa cells around the oocyte and no sign of antrum formation). Additionally, these follicles were classified individually as histologically normal when an intact oocyte was present and surrounded by granulosa cells that were well organized in one or more layers and have no pyknotic nuclei. Atretic follicles were defined as those with a retracted oocyte, pyknotic nucleus, and/or disorganized granulosa cells detached from the basement membrane. Overall, 150 follicles were evaluated for each treatment (30 follicles per treatment-replicate x 5 replicates = 150 follicles).

To evaluate follicular activation (transition from primordial to growing follicles, when surrounding squamous pregranulosa cells become cuboidal and begin to proliferate) and growth, only morphologically normal follicles with a visible oocyte nucleus were recorded, and the proportion of primordial and growing follicles was calculated at day 0 (fresh control),

after 6 or 12 h of preservation and after 1 or 5 d of culture. In addition, from the basement membrane, major and minor axes of each oocyte and follicle were measured using Image-Pro Plus® software. The average of these two measurements was used to determine the diameters of both the oocyte and the follicle.

#### **2.4. Detection of apoptotic cells by TUNEL Assay**

Terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase (TdT) mediated dUTP nick-end labeling (TUNEL) assay was used for a more in-depth evaluation of ovine preantral follicle quality before and after preservation and/or culture in vitro. TUNEL was performed using a commercial kit (In Situ Cell Death Detection Kit, Roche Diagnostics Ltd., Indianapolis, USA) following the manufacturer's protocol, with some modifications. Briefly, sections (5 µm) mounted on glass slides were deparaffinized and rehydrated through graded alcohols, then rinsed in PBS (pH 7.2). Antigen retrieval by microwave treatment was performed in sodium citrate buffer (pH 6.0; Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) for 6 min. Endogenous peroxidase activity was blocked by 3% H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) in methanol (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) at room temperature for 10 min. After rinsing in Tris buffer (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil), the sections were incubated with TUNEL reaction mixture at 37°C for 1 h. Then, the specimens were incubated with Converter-POD in a humidified chamber at 37°C for 30 min. The DNA fragmentation was revealed by incubation of the tissues with diaminobenzidine (DAB; 0.05% DAB in Tris buffer, pH 7.6, 0.03% H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>) during 1 min. Finally, sections were counterstained with Harry's haematoxylin in a dark chamber at room temperature for 1 min, dehydrated in ethanol, cleared in xylene, and mounted with balsam (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil). For negative controls, slides were incubated with label

solution (without terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase enzyme) instead of TUNEL reaction mixture.

Only follicles that contained an oocyte nucleus were analyzed for apoptotic assay. The number of brown TUNEL positive cells (oocyte and granulosa cells) was counted in ten randomly fields per treatment using Image-Pro Plus® software. The percentage of TUNEL positive or apoptotic cells was calculated as the number of apoptotic cells out of the total number of cells.

## **2.5. Statistical analysis**

Percentages of morphologically normal, primordial and developing follicles were submitted to ANOVA test and the Tukey's test was applied for comparison among treatments. Values of pH and apoptotic cells were submitted to Qui-square and differences were considered to be statistically significant when  $P < 0.05$ . The results of follicular survival and growth were expressed as the mean  $\pm$  SD and the results of follicular activation were expressed as the mean  $\pm$  SEM.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Effect of preservation conditions on follicular morphology before and after in vitro culture**

A total of 1,950 preantral follicles were analyzed after in vitro preservation and culture of ovine ovarian tissue in different media and periods. Figures 2A, 2B and 2C show normal follicles in fresh control, after 12 h of preservation in MEM and after 12 h of preservation in MEM followed by 1 day-culture, respectively, whereas Figure 2D illustrates an atretic follicle

cultured for 5 d after preservation for 12 h in MEM. In the atretic follicles, we observed retracted oocytes, pycnotic nuclei and/or disorganized granulosa cells.

The percentages of morphologically normal preantral follicles in fresh tissues (control) and after preservation in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> for 6 or 12 h and further culture are shown in Figure 3. Preservation of ovarian slices in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> (non-cultured), independently of the period, resulted in similar percentages ( $P>0.05$ ) of morphologically normal follicles when compared with the fresh control (76.6%). Compared to the fresh control tissue, a decrease ( $P<0.05$ ) in follicular survival was observed in tissues cultured for 1 d after 12 h of preservation in both media as well as in those cultured for 5 d. In addition, lower percentages ( $P<0.05$ ) of normal follicles were found in tissues cultured for 1 d after being preserved in MEM for 12 h compared to those preserved for 6 h. For both media, the percentage of normal follicles decreased ( $P<0.05$ ) from 1 d to 5 d. Regarding to pH evaluation, the mean pH values for the MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> after 6 h of preservation were 7.38 and 7.36, respectively. The storage of ovarian fragments for 12 h did not result in changes ( $P>0.05$ ) of pH in either solution (7.27 and 7.24 for MEM and MEM<sup>+</sup>, respectively).

### **3.2. Follicular activation and growth during in vitro preservation and culture**

The percentage of primordial and growing follicles (intermediate, primary, and secondary) in fresh tissue or in tissues preserved for 6 or 12 h in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> (non-cultured), and cultured for 1 or 5 d is shown in Figure 4. Fresh ovarian tissues predominantly contained primordial (76.8%) follicles. No change in the percentage of primordial or growing follicles was observed between fresh and preserved (non-cultured) tissues ( $P>0.05$ ). In all culture conditions, a decrease in the percentage of primordial follicles was observed

concomitant with an increase ( $P<0.05$ ) in the percentage of developing follicles compared to the fresh control and preserved (non-cultured) tissues.

Follicle and oocyte diameters were measured and are shown in Table 1. After 5 d of culture, tissues preserved in MEM for 12 h or in MEM<sup>+</sup> for both preservation periods, increased ( $P<0.05$ ) follicular and oocyte diameters when compared to fresh control and other treatments.

### **3.3. Apoptotic cell detection**

Figure 5 shows the percentage of TUNEL positive cells in ovine preantral follicles after preservation and/or culture. TUNEL positive cells increased ( $P<0.05$ ) after 5 d of culture in ovarian tissues preserved in MEM for both periods and in those preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for 12 h when compared to fresh control. The percentage of TUNEL positive cells also increased ( $P<0.05$ ) in follicles cultured for 5 d in MEM<sup>+</sup> after being preserved for 12 h, compared to 6 h. Only for tissues preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for 6 h, the percentage of apoptotic cells was similar among non-cultured tissues and tissues cultured for 1 and 5 d ( $P>0.05$ ). Apoptotic cells were noticed in oocyte, granulosa, stromal (Figure 6) and theca cells (data not shown).

## **4. Discussion**

Generally, ovaries collected at the slaughterhouse are used as a source of oocytes for in vitro studies. Ovarian storage protocols have been intensively studied in several mammalian species (bovine [13]; ovine [3]; caprine [8]; swine [14]; equine [15]). In some cases, the ovaries are transported to the laboratory at approximately 30–37°C [16, 17] and an oocyte transporter may be used for ovarian tissue storage [7, 10]. Thus, we decided to use the oocyte

transporter for preserving slices of ovine ovarian cortex, using the temperature of 35°C and different storage media and periods.

In the present study, preservation of ovarian cortex in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> at 35°C for 12 h resulted in similar percentages of normal follicles to fresh control. Adversely, previous authors have demonstrated that short-term storage (4 h) of ovine ovarian tissue in physiological temperatures (39°C) increases the percentage of atretic preantral follicles [9,3]. It is likely that our preservation medium (MEM) is richer in nutrients than those used previously for ovine tissues, which may have improved preantral follicle survival. MEM is widely used in the *in vitro* culture of ovine [18] and caprine [19] preantral follicles. In addition, the uniform and constant temperature maintained throughout the preservation period in the oocyte transporter may have been important to keep follicular healthy.

Morphological assessment of follicular integrity has been largely used to evaluate the effectiveness of the various treatments (media, temperature and time of preservation) to which ovarian follicles are submitted to [3,5]. However, additional measurements such as *in vitro* follicular development may be used as a reliable evaluation of follicles and/or oocyte viability [20]. In our study, after being preserved for 6 h in both media and cultured for 1 d, ovine preantral follicles maintained the percentage of normal follicles similar to fresh control. Conversely, CHAVES [4] have demonstrated that caprine ovarian tissue preservation at 35°C for up to 4 h promoted a significant decrease in the percentage of normal follicles after culturing for 1 d, compared to the fresh control tissue. These different results may be due to the richest culture medium ( $\alpha$ MEM) used in our study, which was supplemented with rFSH and ascorbic acid.

In the current study, the percentage of normal preantral follicles was significantly reduced when ovaries were stored in both media and preservation periods and then cultured for 5 d. Similar to our results, other authors have shown a decrease in morphological normal

follicles after the transport of caprine ovaries at 32°C, followed by a 5 d culture [12,21]. The culture conditions (which are not well established yet for ovine preantral follicles) can be partially attributed to the degeneration rates observed in the present study after 5 d. In addition to rFSH and ascorbic acid, it is likely that the presence of other components in the culture medium (for example, other hormones and growth factors) could help to maintain the viability of the follicles.

After 1 or 5 d of culture, a higher percentage of primordial follicle activation was observed in ovarian cortex that had been preserved in all media and for all times of incubation. In addition, after 5 d, all cultured follicles and oocytes had a bigger diameter than those from fresh control or cultured for 1 d in the different media, except those from fragments preserved for 6 h in MEM and then cultured for 5 d. These results demonstrate that storage of ovarian tissue in these conditions did not affect the ability of ovine preantral follicles to grow in vitro. Our results were similar to those of MAGALHÃES [11] in which the use of rFSH after culturing for 7 d promoted activation and an increase in follicular diameter.

Apoptosis in ovine oocyte and granulosa cells after preservation and culture was demonstrated by using the detection of in situ end labelling (TUNEL). Apoptosis is a form of programmed cell death and is observed in ovarian follicles throughout fetal and adult life. This is a genetically determined and active event, i.e., dependent on the balance of pro- and anti-apoptotic genes and requires energy [22]. Apoptosis is mediated by active intrinsic mechanisms and extrinsic factors [23], such as oxidative stress, irradiation, activation of gene promoters of apoptosis, damage to DNA, cytokines, viral coat proteins, or the withdrawal of cell growth factors [24]. In the present study, the apoptotic rates increased after 5 d of culture in tissues preserved in MEM for both periods and in those preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for 12 h when compared to fresh control. It is important to note that only tissues preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for up

to 6 h maintained the percentage of apoptotic cells similar among non-cultured tissues and tissues cultured for 1 and 5 d. PENG [25] have suggested that addition of supplements and growth factors into the medium could inhibit apoptosis and maintain ovarian follicle viability. In addition, it is likely that the increase of storage period could have caused depletion of intracellular energy sources, followed by consumption of the nutrients and oxygen available in the preservation medium [3], resulting in the higher apoptotic rates found in tissues preserved for 12 h in MEM<sup>+</sup> followed by 5 d of culture.

In conclusion, the present study showed, for the first time, that ovine ovarian tissue can be successfully preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> at 35°C for up to 6 h using an oocyte transporter, without affecting their apoptosis rates and their ability to develop in vitro.

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Declaration of interest**

None of the authors have any conflict of interest to declare.



### **Author contributions**

In this study, the co-authors R.J.S. Gonçalves, A.Y.P. Cavalcante, B.B. Gouveia, T.L.B. Lins, V.R.P. Barros and T.J.S. Macedo performed the experimental protocols and participated in drafting the full manuscript. V.G. Menezes and R.S. Barberino contributed to TUNEL analysis and participated in revising the manuscript. R.J.S. Gonçalves also contributed to the analysis and interpretation of data. J.R. Figueiredo provided advice and participated in revising the manuscript. M.H.T. Matos participated in substantial contribution to conception and revising it critically for important intellectual content. All the authors in this manuscript have read and approved the final version.

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Table 1: Mean oocyte and follicular diameter (mean  $\pm$  SD) in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h without (non-cultured) or with culture for 1 or 5d.

Treatments	Oocyte diameter ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	Follicle diameter ( $\mu\text{m}$ )
Fresh control	38.2 $\pm$ 3.1	49.9 $\pm$ 4.4
Non-cultured		
MEM – 6 h	41.6 $\pm$ 3.8 <sup>b</sup>	50.6 $\pm$ 3.6 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 6 h	39.5 $\pm$ 4.3 <sup>b</sup>	50.2 $\pm$ 4.1 <sup>b</sup>
MEM – 12 h	38.8 $\pm$ 3.2 <sup>b</sup>	51.1 $\pm$ 3.9 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 12 h	39.1 $\pm$ 3.6 <sup>b</sup>	52.4 $\pm$ 3.3 <sup>b</sup>
1 d of culture		
MEM – 6 h	42.8 $\pm$ 3.1 <sup>b</sup>	53.8 $\pm$ 3.8 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 6 h	43.4 $\pm$ 2.9 <sup>b</sup>	53.7 $\pm$ 3.5 <sup>b</sup>
MEM – 12 h	41.2 $\pm$ 4.1 <sup>b</sup>	52.9 $\pm$ 3.1 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 12 h	43.6 $\pm$ 3.3 <sup>b</sup>	53.6 $\pm$ 3.4 <sup>b</sup>
5 d of culture		
MEM – 6 h	44.8 $\pm$ 2.3 <sup>b</sup>	55.2 $\pm$ 2.9 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 6 h	48.4 $\pm$ 3.2 <sup>*a</sup>	59.8 $\pm$ 3.9 <sup>*a</sup>
MEM – 12 h	46.2 $\pm$ 3.7 <sup>*a</sup>	58.0 $\pm$ 3.6 <sup>*a</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 12 h	48.8 $\pm$ 4.2 <sup>*a</sup>	61.2 $\pm$ 4.9 <sup>*a</sup>

\* Differs significantly from fresh control (P<0.05).

(<sup>a, b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences within the column (P<0.05).

**Figure legends:**

Figure 1: General experimental protocol for preservation of ovine preantral follicles.

Figure 2: Histological sections of ovine ovarian fragments after periodic acid Schiff-hematoxylin staining showing morphologically normal primordial follicles in the fresh control (A) and after 12 h of preservation in MEM (B), normal primary follicle after preservation for 12 h in MEM followed by 1 day-culture (C). Atretic follicles after 12 h of preservation in MEM followed by 5 d of culture (D). O = oocyte; Nu = oocyte nucleus; GC = granulosa cell. (x 400).

Figure 3: Percentages of morphologically normal ovine preantral follicles in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A, B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>a, b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between preservation periods in the same media and same treatment ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Figure 4: Percentages (mean  $\pm$  SEM) of primordial (A) and growing (B) follicles in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A, B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Figure 5: Percentages of TUNEL positive cells in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control

( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A, B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>a, b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between preservation periods in the same media and same treatment ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Figure 6: Apoptosis detection using TUNEL assay in the different ovine ovarian cell types. Normal primordial follicles in the fresh control (A) and preserved for 12 h in MEM followed by 1 d of culture (B); apoptotic primordial follicles preserved for 6 h in MEM followed by 5 d of culture (C); negative control (D). In figure C, note the apoptotic oocyte (\*), granulosa (arrow) and stroma cell (arrow head). O = oocyte; Nu = oocyte nucleus; GC = granulosa cell. (x 400).

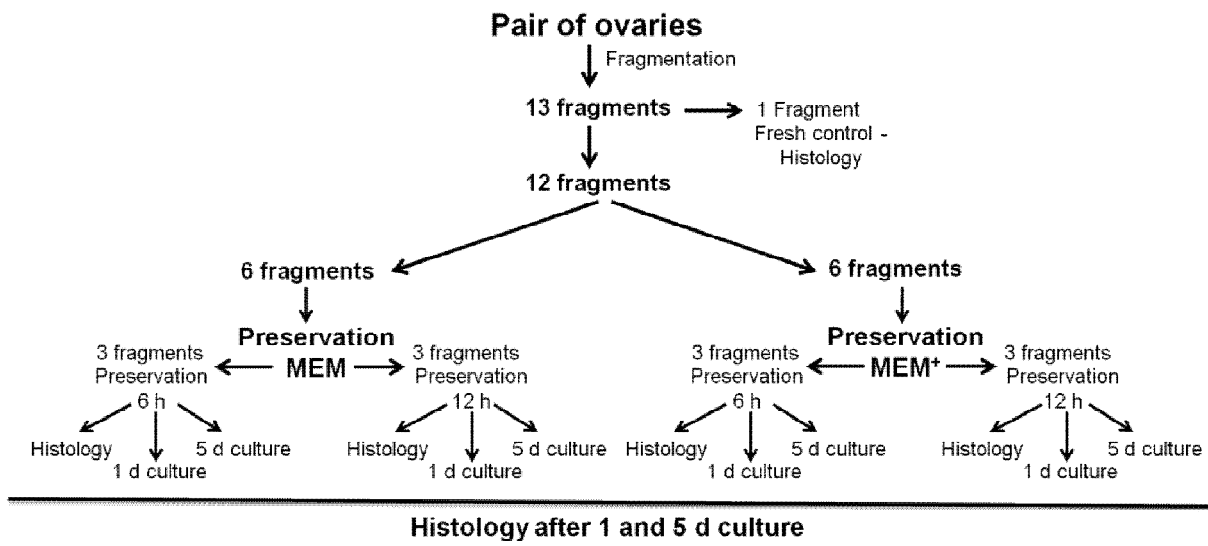


Figure 1: General experimental protocol for preservation of ovine preantral follicles.



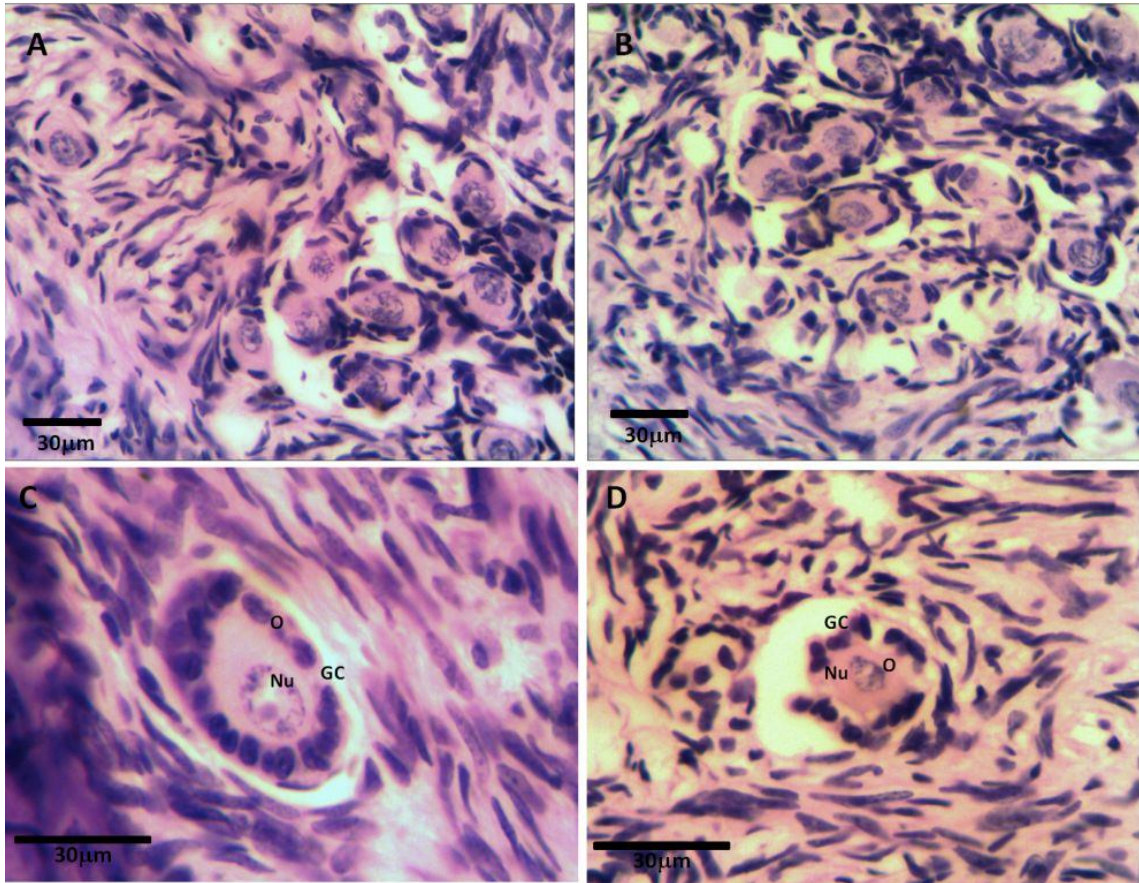


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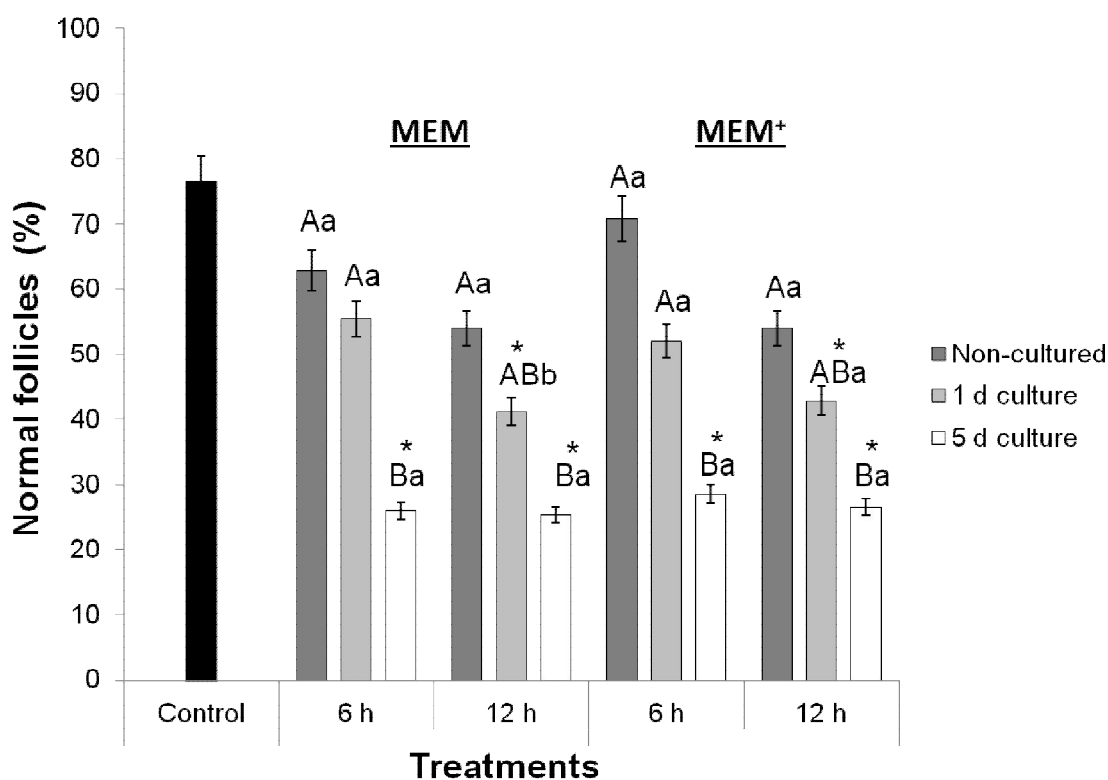


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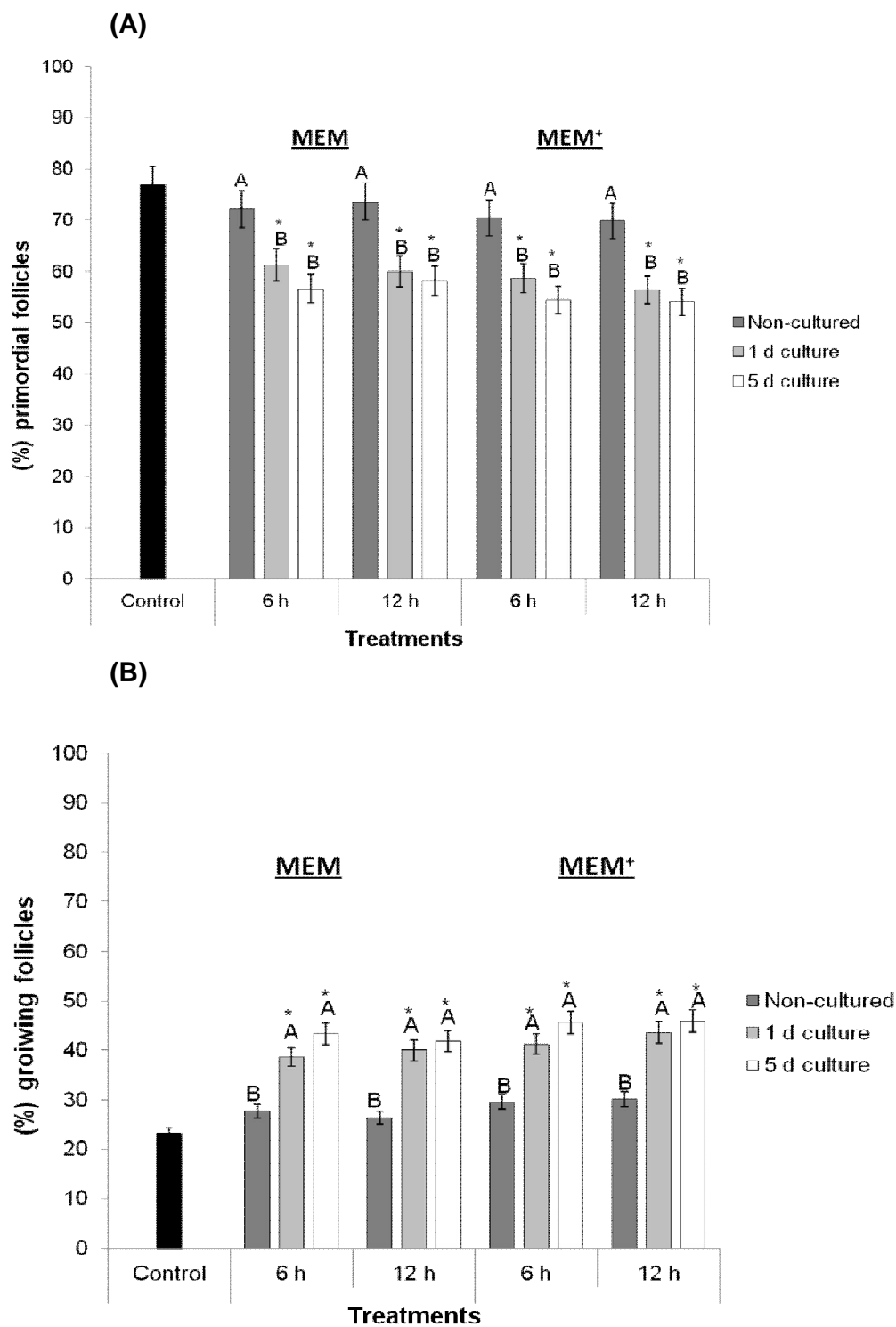


Figure 4: Percentages (mean  $\pm$  SEM) of primordial (A) and growing (B) follicles in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A</sup>, <sup>B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ).

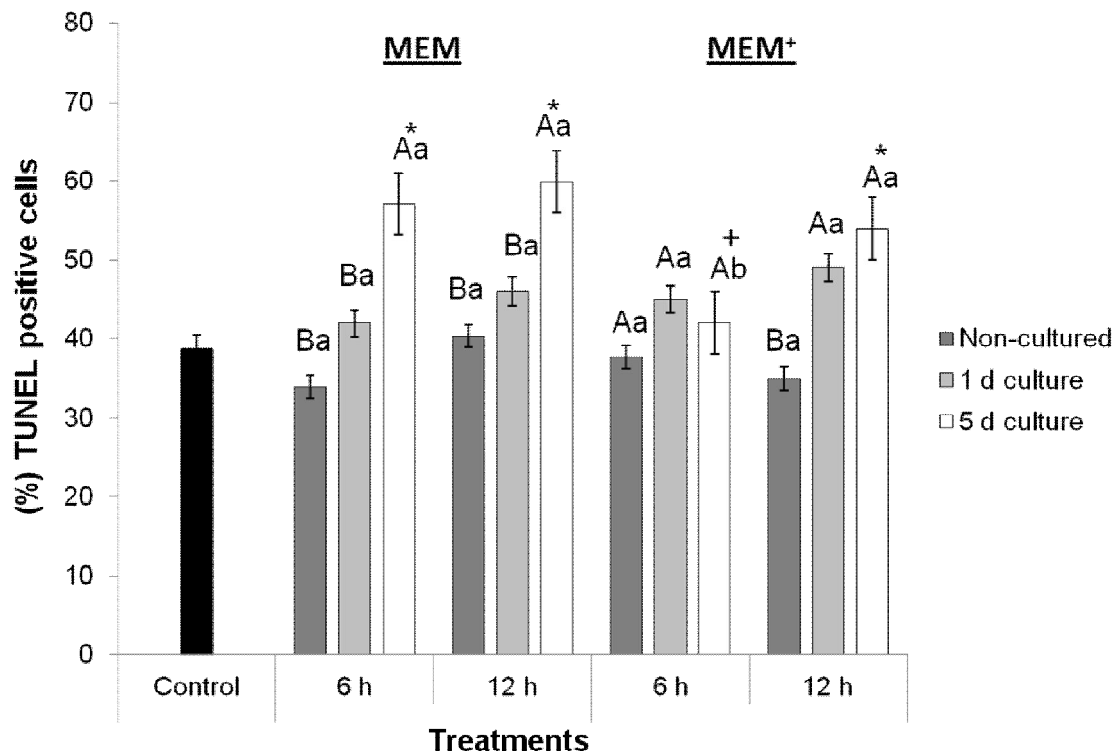


Figure 5: Percentages of TUNEL positive cells in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A, B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>a, b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between preservation periods in the same media and same treatment ( $P < 0.05$ ).

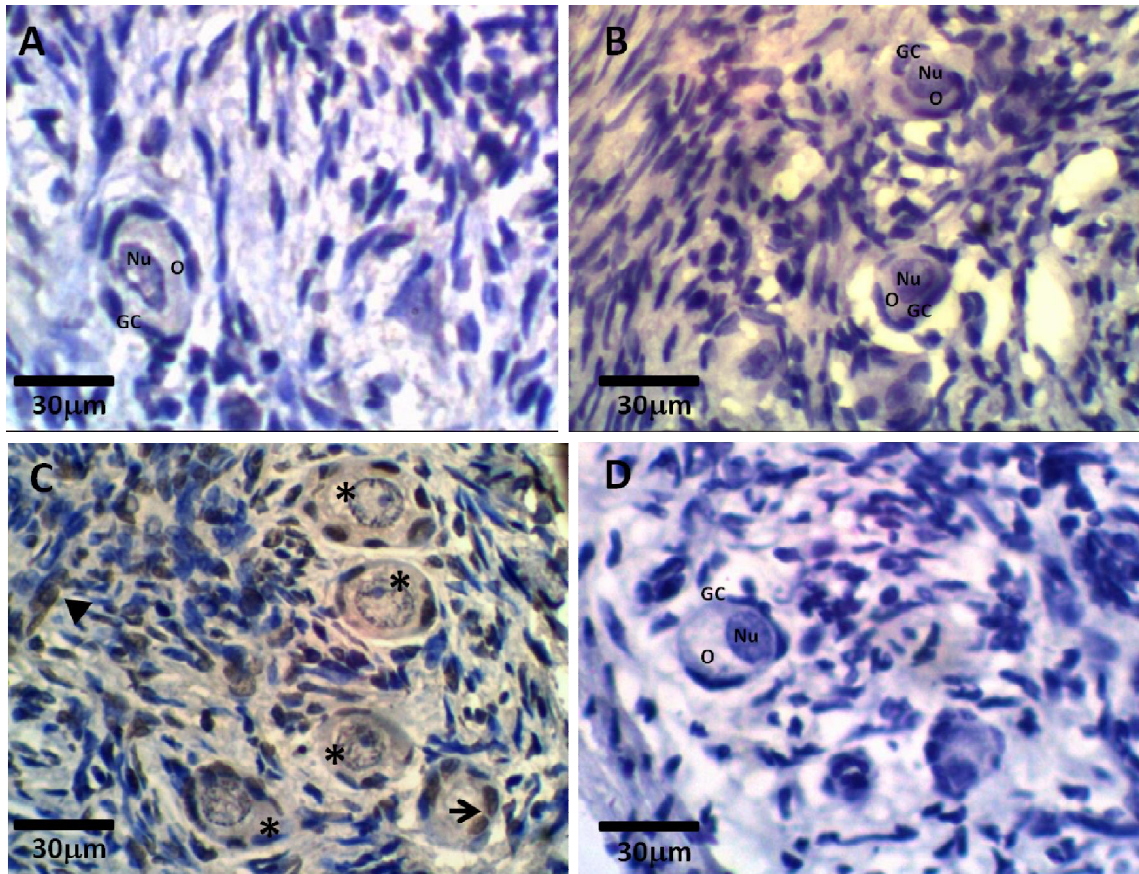


Figure 6: Apoptosis detection using TUNEL assay in the different ovine ovarian cell types. Normal primordial follicles in the fresh control (A) and preserved for 12 h in MEM followed by 1 d of culture (B); apoptotic primordial follicles preserved for 6 h in MEM followed by 5 d of culture (C); negative control (D). In figure C, note the apoptotic oocyte (\*), granulosa (arrow) and stroma cell (arrow head). O = oocyte; Nu = oocyte nucleus; GC = granulosa cell. (x 400).

## 7. Capítulo 2

### **Preservation of caprine ovarian tissue using different media and incubation periods on the morphology, apoptosis and development of preantral follicles in vitro**

R.J.S. Gonçalves<sup>a</sup>, A.Y.P. Cavalcante<sup>a</sup>, B.B. Gouveia<sup>a</sup>, T.LB. Lins<sup>a</sup>, R.S. Barberino<sup>a</sup>, V.G. Menezes<sup>a</sup>, V.R.P. Barros<sup>a</sup>, L.P. Santos<sup>a</sup>, J.M.S. Santos<sup>a</sup>, J.R. Figueiredo<sup>b</sup>, M.H.T. Matos<sup>a</sup>

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**Preservation of caprine ovarian tissue using different media and incubation periods on the morphology, apoptosis and development of preantral follicles in vitro**

R.J.S. Gonçalves<sup>a</sup>, A.Y.P. Cavalcante<sup>a</sup>, B.B. Gouveia<sup>a</sup>, T.LB. Lins<sup>a</sup>, R.S. Barberino<sup>a</sup>, V.G. Menezes<sup>a</sup>, V.R.P. Barros<sup>a</sup>, L.P. Santos<sup>a</sup>, J.M.S. Santos<sup>a</sup>, J.R. Figueiredo<sup>b</sup>, M.H.T. Matos<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Nucleus of Biotechnology Applied to Ovarian Follicle Development, Laboratory of Cell Biology, Cytology and Histology, Federal University of San Francisco Valley – UNIVASF, Petrolina, Brazil.

<sup>b</sup>Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Laboratory of Manipulation of Oocyte and Preantral Follicles (LAMOFOPA), State University of Ceara, 60740-000, Fortaleza-CE, Brazil

\*Correspondence should be addressed to:

Curso de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Animal (CPGCA)

Laboratório de Biologia celular, Citologia e Histologia

Universidade Federal do Vale do São Francisco (UNIVASF)

Rodovia BR 407, Km 12, Lote 543 - Projeto de Irrigação Nilo Coelho - S/N, C1

CEP: 56300-000 - Petrolina - PE – Brasil

Tel.: +55.87.2101.4839

E-mail address: [helena.matos@univasf.edu.br](mailto:helena.matos@univasf.edu.br) (M.H.T. Matos)

**Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate the effect of ovarian tissue transportation conditions (medium and period) on the morphology, apoptosis and development of caprine preantral follicles cultured in vitro. Each ovarian pair was cut into 13 slices, with one fragment being fixed immediately (fresh control). The remaining slices were placed individually in conservation medium (MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup>) and stored at 35°C for 6 or 12 h without (non-cultured) or with a subsequent culture for 1 or 5 d. After incubation and/or culture period, the fragments were processed for histological and TUNEL examination. Results showed that ovarian tissue preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> and those preserved in this medium and cultured for 1 d, resulted in similar percentages ( $P>0.05$ ) of normal follicles to fresh control. After culturing, all treatments promoted follicular activation ( $P<0.05$ ) compared to the control, except for tissues preserved for 6 h in MEM and cultured for 1 day. After 5 d, stored follicles in both media and periods increased ( $P<0.05$ ) follicular and oocyte diameters, compared to fresh control and other treatments. Apoptosis increased ( $P<0.05$ ) after 5 d of culture in tissues preserved for 12 h in both media, compared with control and preserved (non-cultured) tissues. Moreover, apoptosis increased ( $P<0.05$ ) in follicles cultured for 5 d in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> after being preserved for 12 h, compared to 6 h. In conclusion, caprine ovarian tissue can be preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> at 35°C for 6 h, providing lower apoptotic rates than longer storage periods, without affecting their ability to develop in vitro.

**Keywords:** Goat, Ovary, Conservation, Survival, Activation, Growth



## 1. Introduction

Numerous studies have been performed to find alternatives for preserving oocyte viability during the transportation of the ovaries to reproductive technology laboratories because it is well known that oocyte quality is a determinant factor on early embryo development (RIZOS et al., 2002). The short-term preservation is especially important for the transportation of ovaries, mainly in the case of farm or endangered animals when the ovarian donor is far away from specialized laboratories (LUCCI et al., 2004).

Protocols for ovarian tissue transportation have been studied in different species (ovine: MATOS et al., 2004; caprine: CHAVES et al., 2008; bovine: CELESTINO et al., 2007; swine: LIN *et al.*, 2011; equine: GOMES et al., in press). Much attention has been given to the short-term preservation at low temperatures. Caprine and ovine studies have shown that 4°C is the most suitable temperature for storing ovarian tissue, maintaining the percentages of normal follicles similar to those observed in control tissues for up to 24 h (COSTA et al., 2005; MATOS et al., 2004) and for only 4 h after in vitro culture (CHAVES et al., 2008). Nevertheless, storage of ovarian tissue in physiological temperatures (39°C), has not shown satisfactory results for periods higher than 4 (caprine: COSTA et al., 2005) or 2 h (ovine: MATOS et al., 2004), independently of the medium used. In contrast to those unsatisfactory results described at physiological temperatures, in general for in vitro maturation (IVM) studies, the ovaries or the cumulus oocyte complexes (COC) are preserved and transported to the laboratory at approximately 30–37°C (SHIRAZI et al., 2009; WAN et al., 2009).

However, no studies have evaluated the effect of longer term storage (more than 4 hours) of caprine ovarian tissue using physiological temperatures on the follicular survival without or with subsequent in vitro culture of preantral follicles enclosed in ovarian tissue. Thus, the present study aimed to evaluate the effect of storing caprine preantral follicles

enclosed in ovarian slices under different media and periods, and to test the ability of these follicles to survive and grow in vitro after being stored.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Source of ovaries**

Caprine ovaries (n= 10) were obtained at a local slaughterhouse from adult cross-bred goats (n=5). Immediately after death, the ovaries were washed once in 70% alcohol for 10 s and then twice in Minimum Essential Medium (MEM - Sigma Chemical Co, St Louis, USA) containing HEPES and antibiotics (100 µg/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL streptomycin). Unless otherwise mentioned, culture media, supplements and chemicals used in the present study were purchased from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis, MO, USA). The fragments of ovaries were transported to the laboratory at 35°C using an oocyte transporter<sup>12</sup>-Compact® (Wtavet, São Paulo, Brazil).

### **2.2. Experimental protocol**

After collecting, each ovarian pair was cut into 13 slices approximately 3 mm x 3 mm (1 mm thick). For each animal, one slice of tissue was randomly selected and immediately fixed for histological analysis (fresh control). The remaining slices of ovarian cortex (12 slices) were placed individually in cryotubes containing 2 mL of conservation medium (MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup>) and stored at 35°C for 6 or 12 h without (non-cultured) or with a subsequent culture for 1 or 5 d, as shown in Figure 1. The preservation media were MEM alone (the same used for washing the ovaries) or MEM supplemented with ITS (0.1 mg/mL insulin, 0.055

mg/mL transferrin and 0.05 µg/mL sodium selenite), 2 mM glutamine, 2 mM hypoxanthine, 3 mg/mL BSA, 50 µg/mL ascorbic acid, 50 ng/mL recombinant FSH (Nanocore, São Paulo-Brazil), 100 µg/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL streptomycin. The latter medium was named MEM<sup>+</sup>. The pH of the media was monitored before and after the preservation periods (pHmeter - PG2000, Gehaka, São Paulo, Brazil). After preservation periods, one ovarian slice of each medium, was fixed and destined to histological analyzes, whereas the other slices, were cultured individually in 1 mL of culture medium in 24-well culture dishes for 1 or 5 d; the culture conditions were 39 °C in an atmosphere of 5% CO<sub>2</sub> in air. The basic culture medium consisted of α-MEM (pH 7.2–7.4; GIBCO, New York, USA) supplemented with ITS (0.1 mg/mL insulin, 0.055 mg/mL transferrin and 0.05 µg/mL sodium selenite), 0.23 mM pyruvate, 2 mM glutamine, 2 mM hypoxanthine, 1.25 mg/mL BSA, 50 µg/mL ascorbic acid, 50 ng/mL rFSH (Nanocore, São Paulo, Brazil), 100 µg/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL streptomycin. This medium was chosen based on a previous study (MAGALHÃES et al., 2011). Each treatment was repeated five times, thus using the ovaries of five different animals. The culture medium was stabilized at 39 °C for 2 h prior to use and was replenished every second day.

### **2.3. Morphological analysis and assessment of in vitro follicular growth**

Tissues from all treatments (fresh control, preserved for 6 or 12 h or preserved and then cultured for 1 or 5 d) were fixed in 4% buffered formaldehyde (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) for 18 h and then dehydrated in increasing concentrations of ethanol (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil). After paraffin embedding (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil), the caprine tissue pieces were cut into 5 µm sections, and every section was mounted on glass slides and stained

by Periodic Acid Schiff hematoxylin (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil). Follicle stage and survival were examined by microscopy (Nikon, Japan) at X 400 magnification.

The developmental stages of preantral follicles have been defined previously as follows (SILVA et al., 2004): primordial (one layer of flattened granulosa cells around the oocyte) or growing follicles (intermediate: one layer of flattened to cuboidal granulosa cells; primary: one layer of cuboidal granulosa cells, and secondary: two or more layers of cuboidal granulosa cells around the oocyte and no sign of antrum formation). Additionally, these follicles were classified individually as histologically normal when an intact oocyte was present and surrounded by granulosa cells that were well organized in one or more layers and have no pyknotic nuclei. Atretic follicles were defined as those with a retracted oocyte, pyknotic nucleus, and/or disorganized granulosa cells detached from the basement membrane. Overall, 150 follicles were evaluated for each treatment (30 follicles per treatment-replicate x 5 replicates = 150 follicles).

To evaluate follicular activation (transition from primordial to growing follicles, when surrounding squamous pregranulosa cells become cuboidal and begin to proliferate) and growth, only morphologically normal follicles with a visible oocyte nucleus were recorded, and the proportion of primordial and growing follicles was calculated at day 0 (fresh control), after 6 or 12 h of preservation (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. In addition, from the basement membrane, major and minor axes of each oocyte and follicle were measured using Image-Pro Plus® software. The average of these two measurements was used to determine the diameters of both the oocyte and the follicle.

## 2.4. Detection of apoptotic cells by TUNEL Assay

Terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase (TdT) mediated dUTP nick-end labeling (TUNEL) assay was used for a more in-depth evaluation of caprine preantral follicle quality before and after preservation and/or culture in vitro. TUNEL was performed using a commercial kit (In Situ Cell Death Detection Kit, Roche Diagnostics Ltd., Indianapolis, USA) following the manufacturer's protocol, with some modifications. Briefly, sections (5  $\mu\text{m}$ ) mounted on glass slides were deparaffinized and rehydrated through graded alcohols, then rinsed in PBS (pH 7.2). Antigen retrieval by microwave treatment was performed in sodium citrate buffer (pH 6.0; Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) for 6 min. Endogenous peroxidase activity was blocked by 3%  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) in methanol (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil) at room temperature for 10 min. After rinsing in Tris buffer (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil), the sections were incubated with TUNEL reaction mixture at 37°C for 1 h. Then, the specimens were incubated with Converter-POD in a humidified chamber at 37°C for 30 min. The DNA fragmentation was revealed by incubation of the tissues with diaminobenzidine (DAB; 0.05% DAB in Tris buffer, pH 7.6, 0.03%  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ) during 1 min. Finally, sections were counterstained with Harry's haematoxylin in a dark chamber at room temperature for 1 min, dehydrated in ethanol, cleared in xylene, and mounted with balsam (Dinâmica, São Paulo, Brazil). For negative controls, slides were incubated with label solution (without terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase enzyme) instead of TUNEL reaction mixture.

Only follicles that contained an oocyte nucleus were analyzed for apoptotic assay. The number of brown TUNEL positive cells (oocyte and granulosa cells) was counted in ten randomly fields per treatment using Image-Pro Plus® software. The percentage of TUNEL

positive or apoptotic cells was calculated as the number of apoptotic cells out of the total number of cells.

## **2.5. Statistical analysis**

Percentages of morphologically normal, primordial and developing follicles were submitted to ANOVA test and the Tukey's test was applied for comparison among treatments. Values of pH and apoptotic cells were submitted to Qui-square and differences were considered to be statistically significant when  $P < 0.05$ . The results of follicular survival and growth were expressed as the mean  $\pm$  SD and the results of follicular activation were expressed as the mean  $\pm$  SEM.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Effect of preservation conditions on follicular morphology before and after in vitro culture**

A total of 1,950 preantral follicles were analyzed after in vitro preservation and culture of caprine ovarian tissue in different media and periods. Figures 2A, 2B, 2D and 2E show normal follicles in fresh control, after 12 h of preservation in MEM<sup>+</sup> and after 6 or 12 h of preservation in MEM<sup>+</sup> followed by 1 day-culture, respectively. Atretic follicles are shown after 12 h of preservation in MEM (non-cultured; 2C) or followed by 5 d of culture (2F).

The percentages of morphologically normal preantral follicles in fresh tissues (control) and after preservation in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and further culture are shown in Figure 3. Only ovarian tissue preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> and those preserved in this

medium and cultured for 1 d, independently of the period, resulted in similar percentages ( $P>0.05$ ) of morphologically normal follicles to fresh control (74%). However, for both media, the percentage of normal follicles decreased ( $P<0.05$ ) from 1 d to 5 d. Regarding to pH evaluation, the mean pH values in the MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> after 6 h of preservation were 7.33 and 7.31, respectively. The storage of ovarian fragments for 12 h did not result in significant changes ( $P<0.05$ ) of pH in either solution (7.26 and 7.22 for MEM and MEM<sup>+</sup>, respectively).

### **3.2. Follicular activation and growth during in vitro preservation and culture**

The percentage of primordial and growing follicles (intermediate, primary, and secondary) in fresh tissue or in tissues preserved for 6 or 12 h in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> (non-cultured), and cultured for 1 or 5 days is shown in Figure 4. Fresh ovarian tissues predominantly contained primordial (73.9%) follicles. No change in the percentage of primordial or growing follicles was observed between fresh and preserved tissues (non-cultured) ( $P>0.05$ ). In all culture conditions, a significant reduction in the percentage of primordial follicles was observed concomitant with an increase ( $P<0.05$ ) in the percentage of developing follicles compared to the fresh control, except when ovarian tissues was preserved for 6 h in MEM and cultured for 1 day. In addition, a significant increase ( $P<0.05$ ) in the percentage of growing follicles were observed after 5 days of culture in tissues preserved for 12 in MEM compared with 6 h.

Follicle and oocyte diameters were measured and are shown in Table 1. After 5 days of culture, stored follicles in both media and preservation periods, increased ( $P<0.05$ ) follicular and oocyte diameters when compared to fresh control and other treatments.

### 3.3. Apoptotic cell detection

Figure 5 shows the percentage of TUNEL positive cells in caprine preantral follicles after preservation and/or culture. After 1 d of culture, TUNEL positive cells only increased ( $P<0.05$ ) in ovarian tissues preserved in MEM without supplements for both periods when compared to fresh control. Apoptosis increased ( $P<0.05$ ) after 5 d of culture in ovarian tissue preserved for 12 h in both media, compared with control and preserved (non-cultured) tissues. Moreover, the percentage of apoptotic cells also increased ( $P<0.05$ ) in follicles cultured for 5 d in MEM or MEM<sup>+</sup> after being preserved for 12 h, compared to 6 h. Apoptotic cells were noticed in oocyte, granulosa, stromal (Figure 6) and theca cells (data not shown).

## 4. Discussion

Preantral follicle preservation is of great importance to preserve follicular integrity, allowing to good quality follicles for cryopreservation and/or in vitro culture (FIGUEIREDO et al., 2008). In some in vitro studies, the ovaries are transported to the laboratory at approximately 30–37°C (SHIRAZI et al., 2009; WAN et al., 2009) and an oocyte transporter may be used for ovarian tissue storage (BYRD et al., 1997; LOVE et al., 2003). In the present study, we evaluated for the first time the effect of preserving caprine ovarian cortex into an oocyte transporter, using the temperature of 35°C and different storage media and periods on the morphology, apoptosis and in vitro growth of preantral follicles.

Follicular atresia increased after preserving tissues (non-cultured tissues) in MEM without supplements for all incubation periods. Similarly, previously studies have demonstrated that short-term storage (4 h) of caprine ovarian tissue in physiological temperatures (35-39°C) increased the percentage of atretic preantral follicles (FERREIRA et



al., 2001; CHAVES et al., 2008). In contrast, another study performed in our lab has shown that ovine ovarian tissue can be successfully preserved at 35°C for up to 12 h in MEM with or without supplements (GONÇALVES et al., unpublished data). Some studies have suggested that sheep primordial follicles are more resistant to degeneration than goat follicles. For example, MATOS et al. (2004) have preserved normal ovine preantral follicles at 4°C for up to 24 h in 0.9% saline solution, while CARVALHO et al. (2001) kept normal follicles at the same temperature and medium for only 12 h. Although preantral follicles are small and have a low metabolic rate, they are also sensitive to adverse conditions in vitro, such as deficiencies of oxygen and nutrients (MATOS et al., 2004). Thus, we can suggest that an additional supplementation of the preservation medium was essential for the maintenance of caprine follicle morphology in the present study. Moreover, after being preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> for both periods and then cultured for 1 d, caprine preantral follicles maintained the percentage of normal follicles similar to fresh control, which was not observed in tissues stored in MEM. Similar to our results, CHAVES et al., (2008) have demonstrated that caprine ovarian tissue preserved at 35°C in MEM without supplements for up to 4 h promoted a significant decrease in the percentage of normal follicles after culturing for 1 d, compared to the fresh control tissue. It is likely that protein and hormonal supplements added to MEM may be essential for the maintenance of follicular survival and growth, as suggested by other authors (SILVA et al., 2004; PICTON et al., 2008).

In the current study, the percentage of normal follicles was significantly reduced when ovaries were stored in both media and preservation periods and then cultured for 5 d. Similar to our results, other authors have shown a decrease in morphological normal follicles after the transport of caprine ovaries at 32°C, followed by a 5 d culture (SILVA et al., 2004; MARTINS et al., 2005). The culture conditions can be partially attributed to the degeneration rates observed in the present study after 5 d. In addition to rFSH and ascorbic acid, it is likely

that the presence of other components in the culture medium (for example, other hormones and growth factors) could help to maintain the viability of the follicles.

After 1 or 5 d of culture, only medium preserved for 6 h in MEM and then cultured for 1 d did not increase primordial follicle activation. This result demonstrates that additional supplementation of the preservation medium is effective in promoting caprine follicular activation even after short-storage of the tissue (6 h). In addition, after 5 d, all cultured follicles and oocytes had a bigger diameter than those from fresh control or cultured for 1 d in the different media. These results demonstrate that storage of ovarian tissue in these conditions did not affect the ability of caprine preantral follicles to grow in vitro. Similarly, BYRD et al. (1997) have transported ovine oocytes at 39°C in a portable incubator, a type of oocyte transporter, and have observed maturation, fertilization, and developmental rates of oocytes similar to those of oocytes matured in a conventional incubator.

Apoptosis is the mechanism underlying follicular atresia and is fundamental to the cyclical growth and regression of follicles in the human ovary (TILLY, 1996). In the present study, apoptosis in caprine oocyte and granulosa cells after preservation and culture was demonstrated by using the detection of in situ end labelling (TUNEL). The apoptotic rates increased as soon as after 1 d of culture in tissues preserved in MEM for both periods, while after 5 d, apoptosis increased in all treatments when compared to fresh control. According to PENG et al., (2010), addition of supplements and growth factors into the medium could inhibit apoptosis and maintain ovarian follicle viability. It is important to note that apoptosis significantly increased in follicles cultured for 5 d in MEM<sup>+</sup> after being preserved for 12 h, compared to 6 h. Probably, the increase of storage period could have caused depletion of intracellular energy sources, followed by consumption of the nutrients and oxygen available in the preservation medium (MATOS et al., 2004), resulting in the higher apoptotic rates found in tissues preserved for 12 h.

In conclusion, the present study showed, for the first time, that caprine ovarian tissue can be successfully preserved in MEM<sup>+</sup> at 35°C for up to 6 h using an oocyte transporter, providing lower apoptotic rates than longer storage periods, without affecting their ability to develop in vitro.

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### **Declaration of interest**

None of the authors have any conflict of interest to declare.

### **Author contributions**

In this study, the co-authors R.J.S. Gonçalves, A.Y.P. Cavalcante, B.B. Gouveia, T.LB. Lins, V.G. Menezes, V.R.P. Barros, L.P. Santos and J.M.S. Santos performed the experimental protocols and participated in drafting the full manuscript. V.G. Menezes and R.S. Barberino also contributed to TUNEL analysis and participated in revising the

manuscript. R.J.S. Gonçalves also contributed to the analysis and interpretation of data. J.R. Figueiredo provided advice and participated in revising the manuscript. M.H.T. Matos participated in substantial contribution to conception and revising it critically for important intellectual content. All the authors in this manuscript have read and approved the final version.

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Table 1: Mean oocyte and follicular diameter (mean  $\pm$  SD) in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h and after 1 or 5 d of culture.

Treatments	Oocyte diameter ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	Follicle diameter ( $\mu\text{m}$ )
Fresh control	39.8 $\pm$ 4.8	51.2 $\pm$ 4.2
Preservation		
MEM – 6 h	40.3 $\pm$ 3.2 <sup>b</sup>	51.6 $\pm$ 2.9 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 6 h	39.7 $\pm$ 3.3 <sup>b</sup>	49.9 $\pm$ 2.8 <sup>b</sup>
MEM – 12 h	40.8 $\pm$ 3.8 <sup>b</sup>	51.3 $\pm$ 3.5 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 12 h	40.7 $\pm$ 4.3 <sup>b</sup>	51.9 $\pm$ 3.8 <sup>b</sup>
1 d of culture		
MEM – 6 h	41.9 $\pm$ 2.9 <sup>b</sup>	52.2 $\pm$ 3.4 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 6 h	43.8 $\pm$ 3.7 <sup>b</sup>	54.7 $\pm$ 3.1 <sup>b</sup>
MEM – 12 h	43.6 $\pm$ 4.0 <sup>b</sup>	53.9 $\pm$ 3.8 <sup>b</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 12 h	43.7 $\pm$ 2.8 <sup>b</sup>	54.6 $\pm$ 3.2 <sup>b</sup>
5 d of culture		
MEM – 6 h	46.9 $\pm$ 2.2 <sup>*a</sup>	59.2 $\pm$ 3.5 <sup>*a</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 6 h	48.7 $\pm$ 4.2 <sup>*a</sup>	60.8 $\pm$ 3.2 <sup>*a</sup>
MEM – 12 h	48.2 $\pm$ 3.1 <sup>*a</sup>	61.0 $\pm$ 3.9 <sup>*a</sup>
MEM <sup>+</sup> – 12 h	48.8 $\pm$ 3.9 <sup>*a</sup>	60.8 $\pm$ 4.5 <sup>*a</sup>

\* Differs significantly from fresh control (P<0.05).

(<sup>a, b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences within the column (P<0.05).

### Figure legends:

Figure 1: General experimental protocol for preservation of caprine primordial follicles.

Figure 2: Histological sections of caprine ovarian fragments after periodic acid Schiff-hematoxylin staining showing morphologically normal primary follicles in the fresh control (A) and after 12 h of preservation in MEM<sup>+</sup> (B), atretic follicle after 12 h of preservation in MEM (C), normal intermediate (D) and primary follicles after preservation for 6 or 12 h in MEM<sup>+</sup> followed by 1 day-culture, respectively (E), atretic follicles after 12 h of preservation in MEM followed by 5 d of culture (F). In atretic follicles, note oocyte retraction and disorganization of granulosa cells. O = oocyte; Nu = oocyte nucleus; GC = granulosa cell. (x 400).

Figure 3: Percentages of morphologically normal caprine preantral follicles in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A</sup> <sup>B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Figure 4: Percentages (mean  $\pm$  SEM) of primordial (A) and growing (B) follicles in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A</sup> <sup>B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between preservation periods in the same media and same treatment ( $P < 0.05$ ).



Figure 5: Percentages of TUNEL positive cells in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A, B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>a, b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between preservation periods in the same media and same treatment ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Figure 6: Apoptosis detection using TUNEL assay in the different caprine ovarian cell types. Normal primordial follicles in the fresh control (A); apoptotic intermediate follicles preserved for 12 h in MEM followed by 1 d of culture (B) or preserved for 6 h in MEM followed by 5 d of culture (C); negative control (D). O = oocyte; Nu = oocyte nucleus; GC = granulosa cell. (x 400).

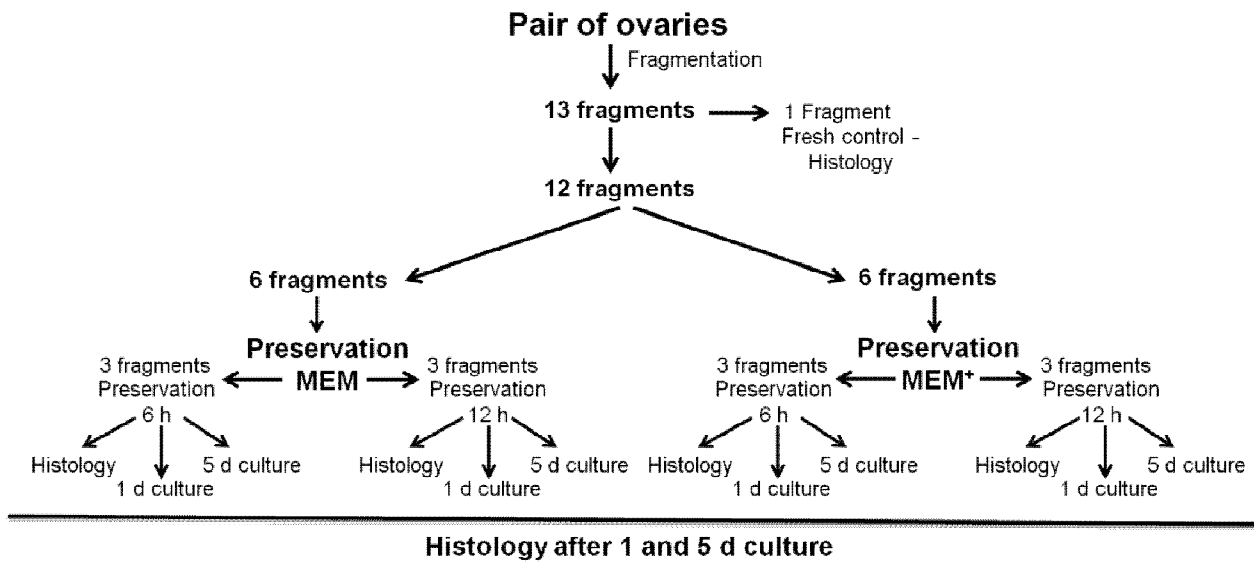


Figure 1: General experimental protocol for preservation of caprine primordial follicles.

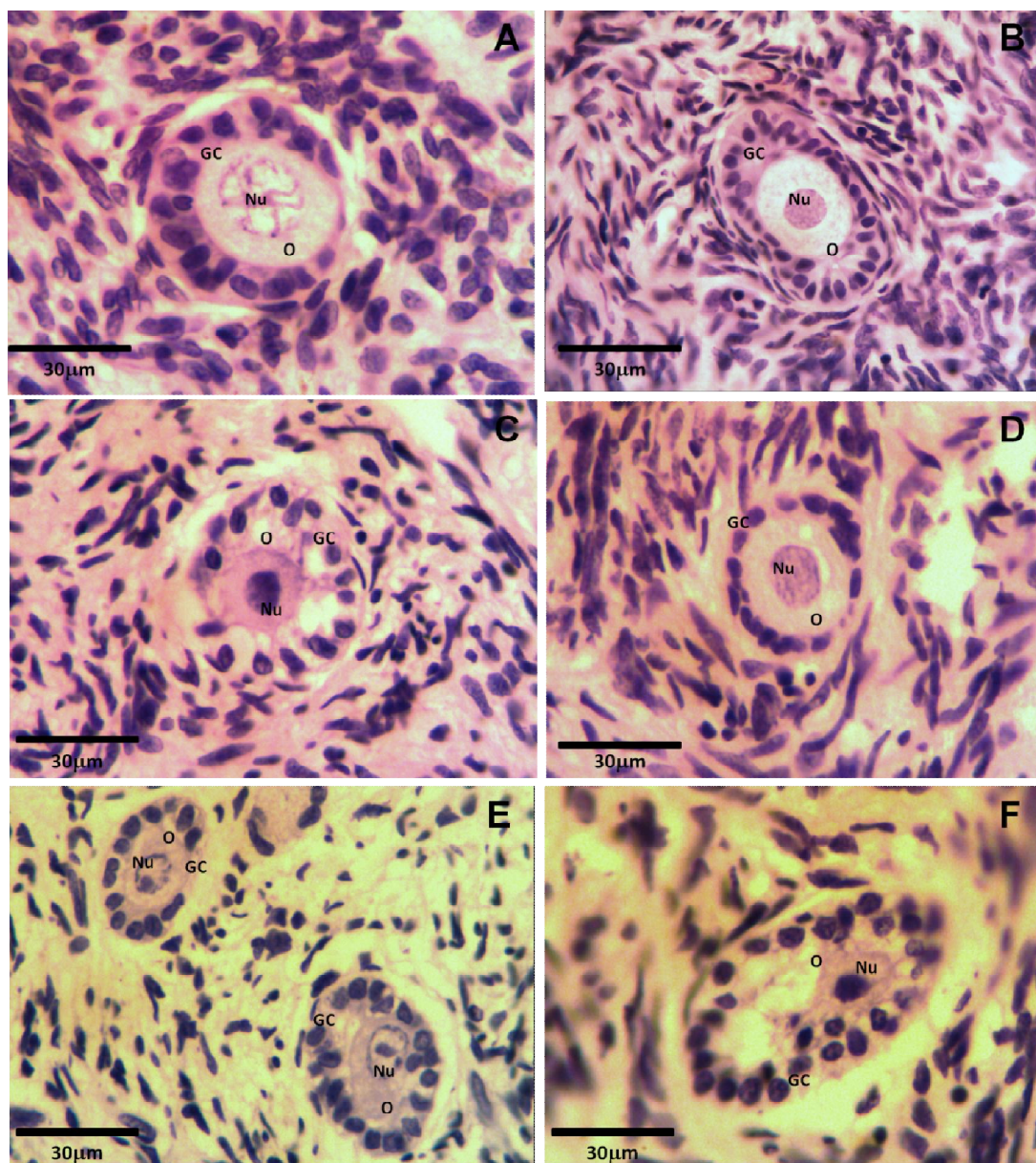


Figure 2: Histological sections of caprine ovarian fragments after periodic acid Schiff-hematoxylin staining showing morphologically normal primary follicles in the fresh control (A) and after 12 h of preservation in MEM<sup>+</sup> (B), atretic follicle after 12 h of preservation in MEM (C), normal intermediate (D) and primary follicles after preservation for 6 or 12 h in MEM<sup>+</sup> followed by 1 day-culture, respectively (E), atretic follicles after 12 h of preservation in MEM followed by 5 d of culture (F). In atretic follicles, note oocyte retraction and disorganization of granulosa cells. O = oocyte; Nu = oocyte nucleus; GC = granulosa cell. (x 400).

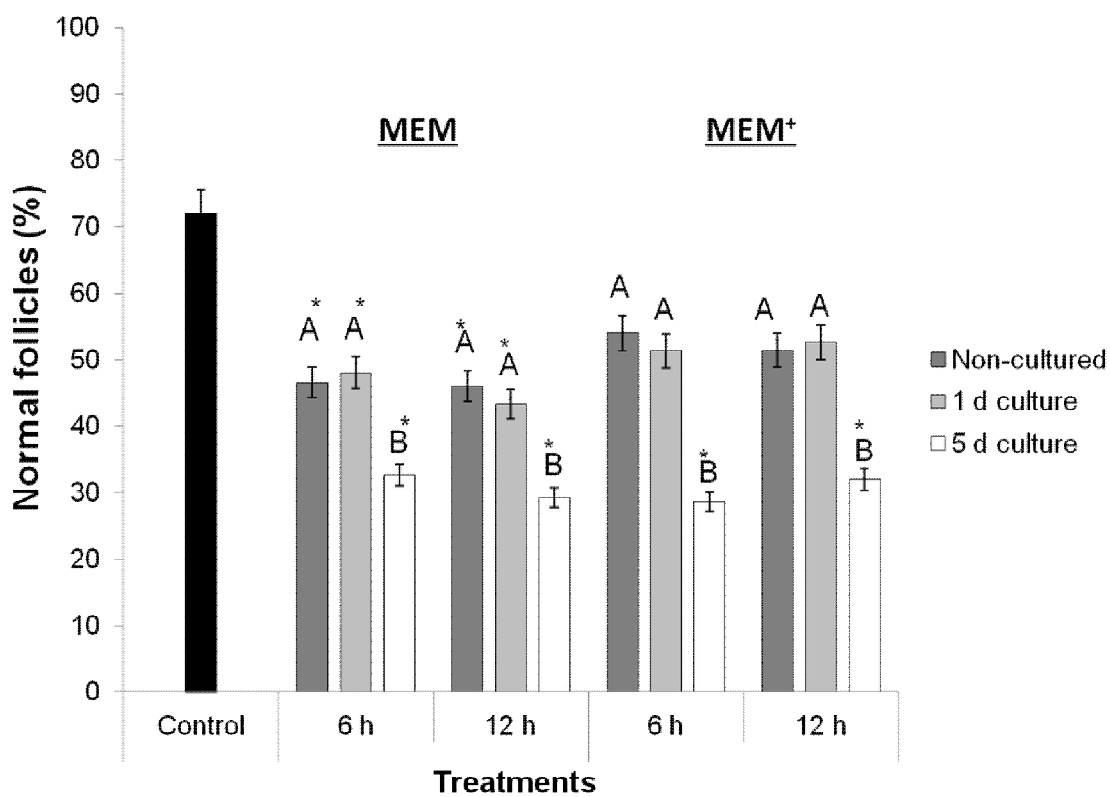


Figure 3: Percentages of morphologically normal caprine preantral follicles in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A, B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ).

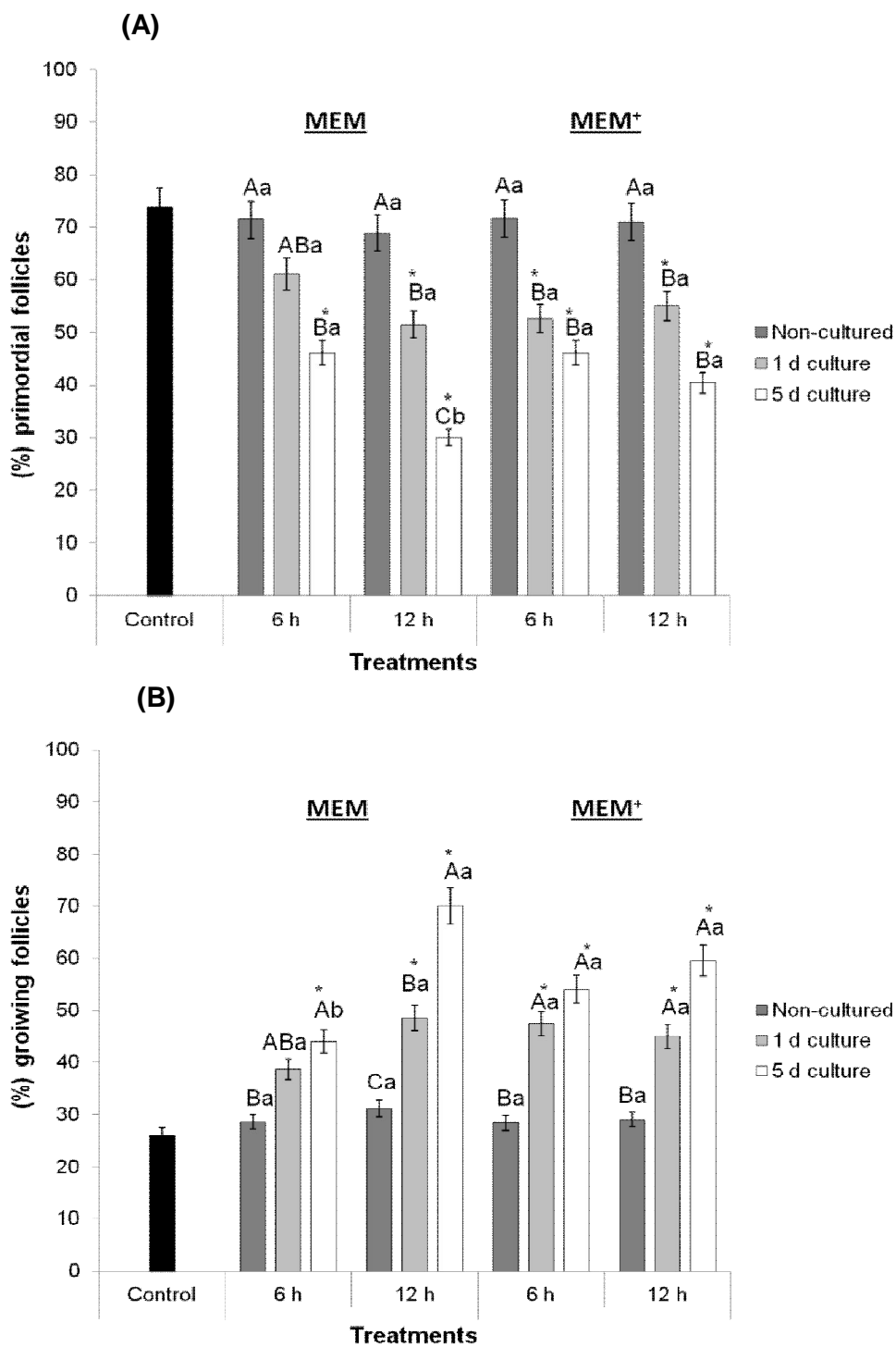


Figure 4: Percentages (mean  $\pm$  SEM) of primordial (A) and growing (B) follicles in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h (non-cultured) and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A</sup>, <sup>B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>a</sup>, <sup>b</sup>)

Different letters denote significant differences between preservation periods in the same media and same treatment ( $P < 0.05$ ).

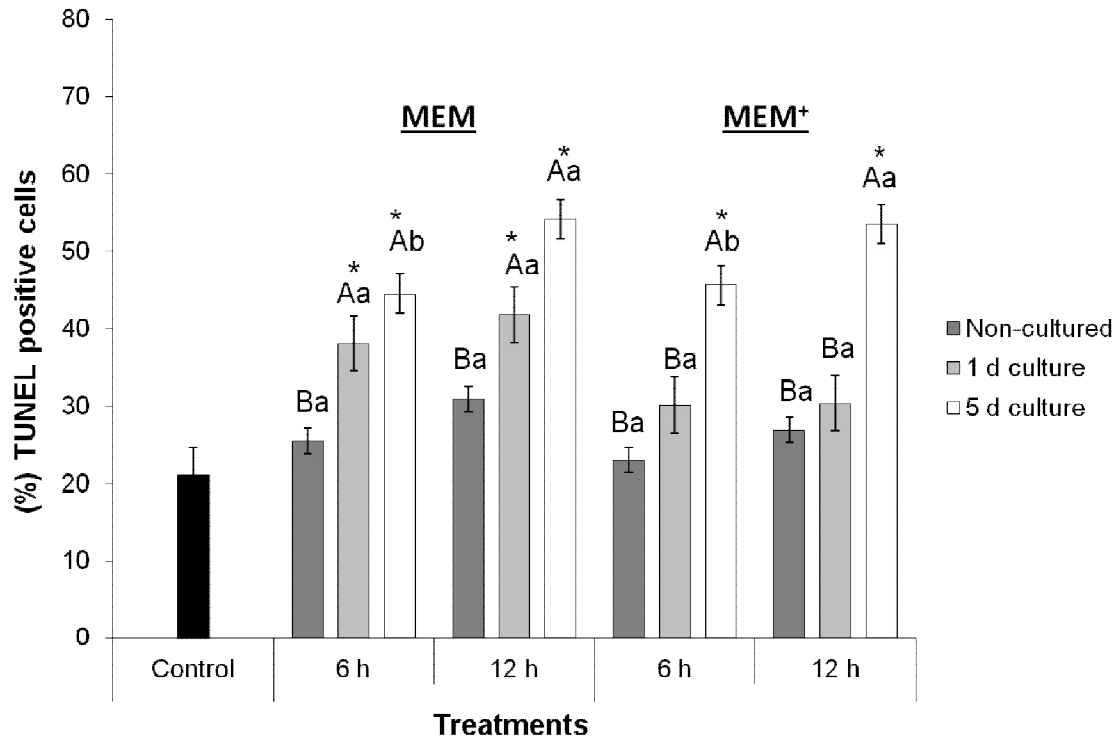


Figure 5: Percentages of TUNEL positive cells in the fresh control, after preservation for 6 or 12 h and after 1 or 5 d of culture. \* Differs significantly from fresh control ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>A, B</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between treatments in the same preservation medium and period ( $P < 0.05$ ). (<sup>a, b</sup>) Different letters denote significant differences between preservation periods in the same media and same treatment ( $P < 0.05$ ).



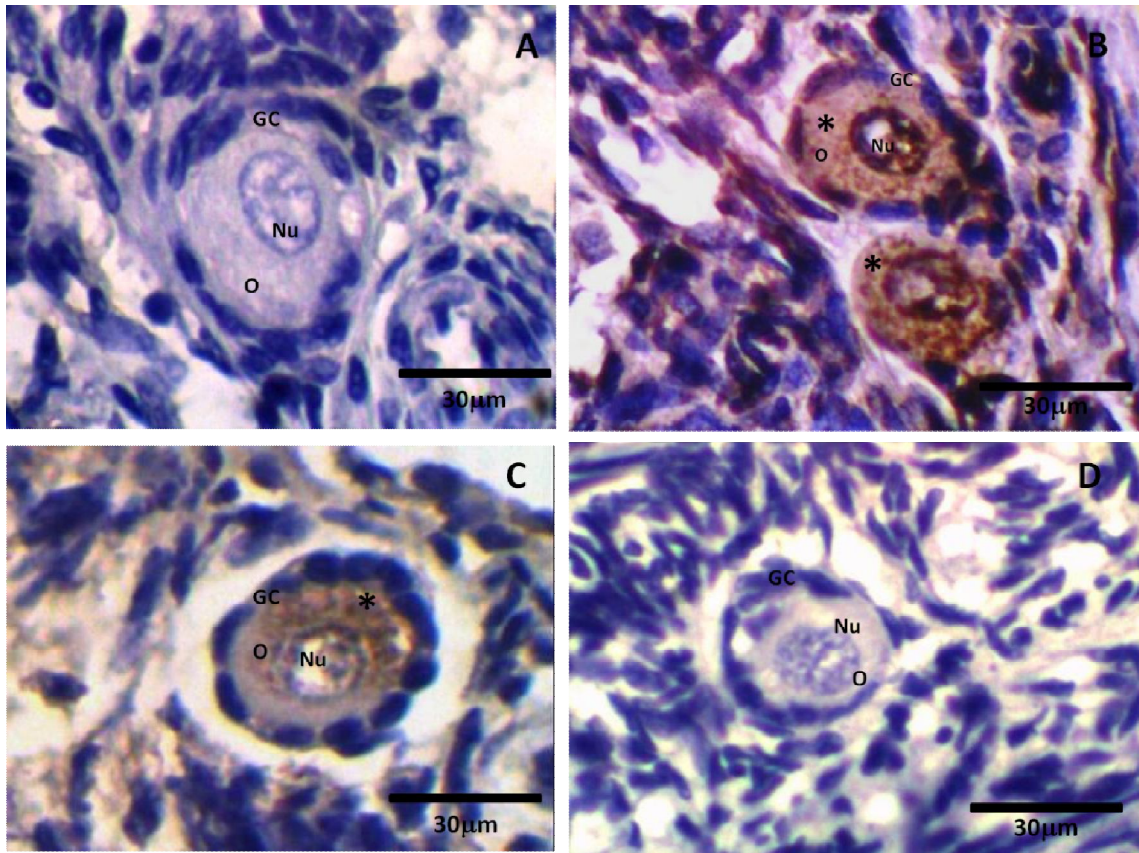


Figure 6: Apoptosis detection using TUNEL assay in the different caprine ovarian cell types. Normal primordial follicles in the fresh control (A); apoptotic intermediate follicles preserved for 12 h in MEM followed by 1 d of culture (B) or preserved for 6 h in MEM followed by 5 d of culture (C); negative control (D). O = oocyte; Nu = oocyte nucleus; GC = granulosa cell. (x 400).

## 8. Conclusão Geral

Este trabalho foi pioneiro na análise da sobrevivência, apoptose e desenvolvimento *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais caprinos e ovinos conservados na utilização do TO para tal procedimento. Foi possível observar que a utilização do meio MEM<sup>+</sup> para conservação *in vitro* de tecido ovariano ovino e caprino em um transportador de oócitos por até 6 h à 35°C, pode preservar a morfologia dos folículos pré-antrais, diminuindo a taxa de apoptose e mantendo a posterior capacidade de desenvolvimento folicular após cultivo *in vitro*.

Semelhantemente, nas duas espécies, após os períodos de conservação com o posterior cultivo por 5 dias, observou-se a diminuição da porcentagem de folículos morfologicamente normais. Desta forma, novos estudos referentes à conservação com subsequente cultivo *in vitro* de folículos pré-antrais caprinos e ovinos devem ser realizados objetivando complementar os dados obtidos neste experimento. Em futuros trabalhos, podem-se ser testar a adição de novos componentes ao meio de conservação e ou ao de cultivo (hormônios, fatores de crescimento, antioxidantes), além de um tempo de conservação e/ou cultivo *in vitro* maior para o crescimento dos oócitos. Isso permitiria a maturação do oócito com posterior FIV, e finalizando com o objetivo principal da técnica MOIFOPA, que é a obtenção de embriões viáveis.



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