



UNIVERSIDAD DE LA REPÚBLICA
FACULTAD DE VETERINARIA

Programa de Posgrados

**EVALUACIÓN DE PANELES DE POLIMORFISMOS DE NUCLEÓTIDO SIMPLE COMO
HERRAMIENTAS EN LA MEJORA GENÉTICA DE OVINOS CORRIEDALE**

LIC. BEATRIZ CARRACELAS MÁRQUEZ

TESIS DE MAESTRÍA EN PRODUCCIÓN ANIMAL

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FIRMA

Beatriz Carracelas, presentó una tesis de MSc, con antecedentes basados en bibliografía actualizada presentando una adecuada redacción. Los objetivos de la misma son muy claros, generando aportes originales sobre la utilización de diferentes paneles de marcadores moleculares tipo SNP aplicados al mejoramiento de la resistencia genética a nematodos gastrointestinales en ovinos. Los resultados de la misma se presentaron en formato de dos artículos científicos para ser publicados en revistas arbitradas, así como dos presentaciones realizadas en congresos vinculados al tema de tesis. Uno de los artículos ya fue aceptado para su publicación en una revista arbitrada y el otro se encuentra en proceso de revisión. En la defensa oral aportó elementos claros y didácticos que respaldan la parte escrita, respondiendo con solvencia las preguntas realizadas por los miembros del tribunal. En resumen, es una tesis de Msc con valioso aporte científico sobre la utilidad de distintos paneles de SNP aplicados a la mejora genética, en un tema de vital interés en producción y sanidad ovina.

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RESUMEN

Los nematodos gastrointestinales (NGI) son las infecciones parasitarias más prevalentes en ovinos. Una alternativa de control es la selección de animales genéticamente resistentes utilizando como criterio de selección el recuento de huevos por gramo en heces (HPG). Los objetivos de esta tesis fueron: 1) evaluar el aporte de información molecular a través de la comparación de las precisiones de los valores de cría (EBV) y EBV genómicos (GEBV) de HPG y diámetro de fibra (DF) en la raza Corriedale, y 2) identificar regiones genómicas asociadas a la resistencia a NGI en ovinos Corriedale a través del estudio de asociación genómica en un solo paso (ssGWAS) de la característica HPG. El análisis incluyó 19.547 corderos con dato de HPG, de los cuales 454, 711 y 383 contaban con información molecular de 170, 507 y 50K SNP respectivamente. Los EBV y GEBV se estimaron con un modelo animal univariado que incluyó los efectos fijos grupo contemporáneo, tipo de nacimiento y edad de la madre y edad al registro como covariable. Para el primer objetivo se consideraron pesos diferenciales (α) en la matriz de relaciones genómicas, identificándose los modelos con mejor ajuste con el criterio de información de Akaike, que fueron utilizados para la estimación de los GEBV y sus precisiones. El uso de α solo impactó en el ajuste a bajas densidades de SNP. No se encontraron diferencias en las precisiones promedio de la población total. En cambio, en el subgrupo de animales genotipados las precisiones aumentaron un 2% con 170 SNP ($\alpha=0,25$), y con 507 SNP incrementaron 5% ($\alpha=0,5$) y 14% ($\alpha=0,75$). No hubo diferencias en precisiones de los EBV y GEBV de DF. El mejor desempeño del panel de 507 con $\alpha=0,75$ podría estar relacionado con el mayor peso asignado a la información molecular (matriz G) comparado con la matriz de pedigree (A). Para el segundo objetivo se estimaron los efectos de los SNP a partir de los GEBV y se calcularon los p-valores con el programa POSTGSF90. El nivel de significancia fue definido por la Tasa de Descubrimiento Falso a nivel de cromosoma de $\alpha=0,05$. Se identificaron regiones significativas en los cromosomas 1, 3, 12 y 19 cuando se utilizaron 170 SNP; en los cromosomas 7, 12 y 24 con el panel de 507 SNP y en el cromosoma 7 con el panel de 50K SNP. Los genes candidatos localizados en estas regiones, utilizando como referencia el genoma ovino Oar_v4.0, son: TIMP3, TLR5, LEPR y TLR9 (170 SNP), SYNDIG1L y MGRN1 (panel de 507 SNP) e INO80, TLN2, TSHR y EIF2AK4 (panel de 50K SNP). Los resultados son auspiciosos respecto al potencial de aumentar las precisiones de los GEBV de resistencia genética a NGI aún con bajas densidades de SNP. Además, se validaron regiones genómicas asociadas a HPG previamente identificadas en Corriedale y otras razas, y se reportaron regiones nuevas a ser investigadas.

SUMMARY

Gastrointestinal nematodes (GIN) are the most prevalent parasitic infection in sheep. One control strategy is the selection of genetically resistant animals using eggs per gram of feces (EPG) as a selection criterion. This thesis objectives were: 1) to evaluate molecular information contribution through the comparison of EPG and fiber diameter (FC) estimated breeding values (EBV) and genomic EBV (GEBV) in Corriedale breed, and 2) to identify genomic regions associated to GIN resistance in Corriedale sheep through single-step genome wide association study (ssGWAS). Analysis included 19.547 lambs with EPG data, of which 454, 711 and 383 had molecular information from 170, 507 and 50K single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNP) respectively. A univariate animal model was used for EBV and GEBV estimation which included contemporary group, type of birth and dam age as fixed effects and age at registry as covariate. For the first objective, differential weights (α) were considered in the genomic relationship matrix, and the best fit models were identified using Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC), which were later used for GEBV and accuracy estimations. The use of α just impacted on low SNP density fit. No differences were observed in mean accuracies for the whole population. However, in the genotyped group accuracies increased by 2% with 170 SNP ($\alpha=0,25$), and 5% ($\alpha=0,5$) and 14% ($\alpha=0,75$) with 507 SNP. No differences were observed in FD EBV and GEBV mean accuracies. The 507 SNP chip with ($\alpha=0.75$) better performance could be related to the higher weight given to the molecular information (G matrix) compared to the pedigree (A matrix). For the second objective SNP effects were estimated from GEBV and p-values calculated with POSTGSF90 software. Significance level was defined as $\alpha=0,05$ chromosome wise False Discovery Rate (FDR). Significant regions were identified on chromosomes 1, 3, 12 and 19 with 170 SNPs; on chromosomes 7, 12 and 24 with the 507 SNP panel and chromosome 7 with the 50K panel. Using Oar_v4.0 reference genome assembly, candidate genes located in these regions were: TIMP3, TLR5, LEPR and TLR9 (170 SNPs), SYNDIG1L and MGRN1 (507 SNP panel) and INO80, TLN2, TSHR and EIF2AK4 (50K SNP panel). Results are auspicious because GIN genetic resistance GEBV accuracies have the potential to be increased even though low SNP densities are used. Also, genomic regions associated with EBV previously identified in Corriedale and other breeds were validated and new regions identified.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Los ovinos (*Ovis aries*), al igual que los caprinos (*Capra aegagrus hircus*), fueron los primeros animales domesticados por el hombre (Zygoiannis, 2006). Los ovinos son animales multipropósito, criados para la producción de carne, leche, lana y cueros, por lo que tienen una enorme importancia socioeconómica a nivel mundial. En Uruguay la producción ovina es altamente relevante. La declaración jurada del 2021 mostró una leve baja del stock ovino situándose actualmente en 6,18 millones de cabezas. El 54% de la población ovina se encuentra distribuida en la región noroeste del país, principalmente en los departamentos de Salto, Artigas, Paysandú y Tacuarembó y 33% en los departamentos de Durazno, Cerro Largo, Lavalleja, Florida, Treinta y Tres y Rivera (MGAP-DIEA, 2021). La raza ovina mayoritaria del Uruguay es la raza Corriedale, con 42% del stock ovino nacional, seguida por la raza Merino Australiano con un 27% (MGAP-OPYPA, 2016).

Uruguay exporta lana peinada en tops, lana en estado natural (lana sucia) y carne. El 2021 fue un año de recuperación de las exportaciones luego de un año de fuerte caída debido a la pandemia de covid. Las exportaciones de tops fueron de US\$ 85 millones (un 62% de aumento respecto al año 2020) mientras que las exportaciones de lana sucia sumaron US\$ 73 millones (un 89% de aumento). Las exportaciones de carne ovina aumentaron un 72% con respecto al año anterior, situándose en US\$ 108 millones (MGAP-OPYPA, 2021).

Los sistemas de producción ovina del Uruguay tienen como principal recurso forrajero a las pasturas naturales y se desarrollan en un régimen de pastoreo mixto de bovinos y ovinos (Oficialdegui, 2002). La base forrajera de pasturas nativas y el sistema de pastoreo continuo determinan la presencia de nematodos gastrointestinales (NGI) como un elemento intrínseco con el que se debe convivir (Castells, 2005).

Las infecciones por NGI son las infecciones parasitarias más prevalentes en ovinos en pastoreo a nivel mundial, causantes de importantes pérdidas económicas a la industria ovina, tanto por la disminución en la producción de carne y lana como también por los costos asociados a su control. Por ejemplo, en Australia Lane et al. (2015) reportaron pérdidas de AUD 436 millones por año. A nivel nacional, si bien no existen estimaciones en términos económicos, varios estudios indican una disminución importante del desempeño animal por efecto de las infecciones por NGI. Estudios realizados por el Secretariado Uruguayo de la Lana (SUL) y la División de Laboratorios Veterinarios del Ministerio de Ganadería, Agricultura y Pesca (DILAVE), mostraron que el impacto potencial de los NGI en la cría ovina es de 50% de mortalidad, 29,4% en disminución del peso de vellón sucio, 23,6% en la reducción de peso vivo, 10,9% en el largo de mecha y 6,5% en la reducción del diámetro de fibra (Castells et al. 1995). Los NGI afectan también los parámetros reproductivos con: disminuciones de entre 15 a 21% de la tasa ovulatoria en ovejas con distintos grados de parasitosis (Fernández Abella, 2006).

Aunque todos los ovinos en pastoreo presentan algún grado de infección, usualmente las bajas cargas parasitarias tienen bajo impacto en la salud animal. Los ovinos fueron domesticados hace 8000-10000 años, y en esa época tenían un comportamiento de pastoreo estacional, que les permitía moverse libremente dependiendo del alimento disponible y las condiciones climáticas. Esta situación dificultaba que los nematodos pudieran completar la fase de vida libre del ciclo parasitario, por lo que sus probabilidades de supervivencia se reducían. Hoy en día, con la intensificación de la ganadería, el aumento de la carga animal en menores superficies ha provocado un cambio en el microambiente

con ovinos pastoreando más cerca del suelo lo que favorece tanto la supervivencia de las fases de vida libre de los NGI como la mayor probabilidad de ser ingeridas por el huésped (Karlsson & Greeff, 2012).

A medida que la carga parasitaria aumenta, aparecen efectos subclínicos, tales como disminución del apetito, de la digestibilidad de la proteína cruda, pérdida de proteína endógena, interferencia con la absorción, alteración en la síntesis de tejido corporal y alteración del metabolismo mineral, factores claves en el crecimiento y desarrollo de los animales, provocando efectos permanentes (Giudici et al. 2013). Con altas cargas parasitarias pueden desarrollarse signos clínicos, incluyendo pérdida de peso, anemia, edema submandibular y diarrea (Zajac & Garza, 2020).

Las drogas antihelmínticas se utilizan como el principal método de control, pero su uso incorrecto ha llevado al desarrollo de resistencia antihelmíntica. Esta situación derivó en el surgimiento de estrategias de control alternativas, como por ejemplo el uso de pasturas seguras, el uso de vacunas, el control biológico con hongos fitopatógenos, el uso de pasturas con alto contenido de taninos condensados, el aumento de los niveles de proteína en la dieta que mejoran la respuesta natural y la selección genética de animales resistentes (Castells, 2005). Una de las ventajas de tener una población de animales genéticamente resistentes a los NGI es que un individuo o majada necesitará menos dosificaciones y habrá menos larvas infectivas en la pastura (McManus et al. 2014).

Es ampliamente conocido que a nivel mundial existen diferencias entre animales y entre razas en lo que respecta a la resistencia a NGI. Estas diferencias tienen una base genética, que en esta característica en particular es moderadamente heredable y, por lo tanto, factible de ser mejorada por selección genética. Los programas de mejoramiento genético tienen como objetivo identificar los animales superiores para lograr progreso genético dentro de cada raza. Las evaluaciones genéticas nacionales de las principales razas ovinas se enfocan principalmente en características de crecimiento y calidad de lana y canal, pero dada su importancia, también se incluye la resistencia genética a los NGI en las Evaluaciones Genéticas Poblacionales de la raza Corriedale y de la raza Merino Australiano (Balconi Marques et al. 2020).

En la actualidad, la selección genómica (SG) está siendo implementada en diversos programas de mejoramiento genético de ovinos en Australia (Daetwyler et al. 2010; 2012a; 2012b), Nueva Zelanda (Auvray et al. 2014) y Francia (Duchemin et al. 2012; Baloche et al. 2014). Las ventajas de este tipo de selección es que permite aumentar la precisión de los valores de cría estimados (EBV, Estimated Breeding Value) y predecir el genotipo de animales que no cuentan con dato fenotípico, pero sí con información genómica. Esto es especialmente importante en características de baja heredabilidad, de difícil medición o de expresión tardía en la vida del animal. En ovinos de Uruguay hay varios proyectos de investigación en curso que buscan incorporar información genómica en la estimación del EBV para resistencia genética tanto en la raza Merino Australiano como en la Corriedale. Este trabajo se encuentra enmarcado en uno de estos proyectos.

2. ANTECEDENTES ESPECÍFICOS

2.1. Parasitosis gastrointestinales

En Uruguay, las condiciones ambientales favorecen el desarrollo de los NGI durante todo el año, al estar situado entre los 30 y 35 grados de latitud sur, en una zona subtropical templada, con

cuatro estaciones bien definidas y con precipitaciones medias anuales entre 1200 y 1600 mm (Castaño et al. 2011). Este tipo de clima permite la coexistencia de géneros parasitarios típicos de climas tropicales como *Cooperia spp.* así como también de climas fríos como *Nematodirus spp.* (Nari & Cardozo, 1987). El último estudio de prevalencia realizado en Uruguay determinó que los géneros prevalentes en ovinos son *Haemonchus spp.* y *Trichostrongylus spp.* seguidos en mucho menor medida por los géneros *Nematodirus*, *Cooperia*, *Teladorsagia*, *Stroglyoides*, *Trichuris* y *Oesophagostomum* (Castells et al. 2011) (Figura 1). Este estudio coincide con el primer estudio de prevalencia realizado en el país, donde se encontró que existe un amplio espectro de especies parasitarias con una notoria prevalencia de *Haemonchus contortus* (43%) seguida por *Trichostrongylus colubriformis* (26%) (Nari et al. 1977).

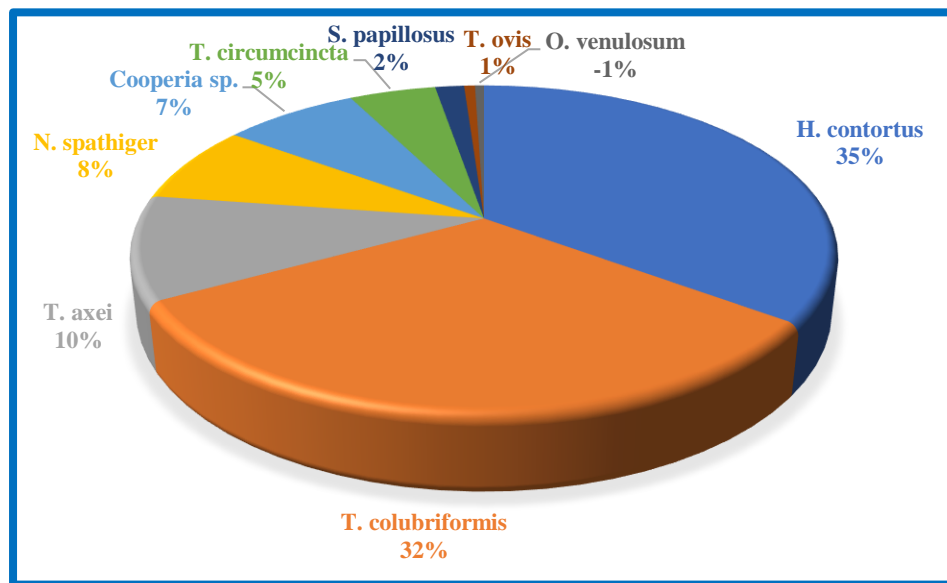


Figura 1: Prevalencia de especies y/o géneros de nematodos gastrointestinales en ovinos en Uruguay. Adaptado de Castells et al. (2011)

Haemonchus contortus es el nematodo más patogénico (Sanders et al. 2020). Es un parásito del abomaso que se alimenta de sangre por lo que genera anemia e hipoproteinemia. Su mayor prevalencia ocurre en otoño y primavera, pero también en veranos lluviosos, en los que las condiciones de humedad y alta temperatura proporcionan un ambiente favorable para el desarrollo de las larvas (Castells, 2004). Presenta un elevado potencial biótico, la hembra elimina miles de huevos por día que, en condiciones adecuadas de temperatura y humedad, permiten la continuidad de 4 o 5 generaciones anuales (Giudici et al. 2013).

Los NGI del género *Trichostrongylus spp.* pueden parasitar tanto el abomaso (*Trichostrongylus axei*) como el intestino delgado (*Trichostrongylus colubriformis*) pero no es frecuente que causen mortandad, aunque sí pérdidas productivas. Altas cargas de estos NGI pueden causar diarrea severa y pérdidas de peso vivo (Sutherland & Scott, 2009).

2.1.1. Ciclo de vida parasitario

El ciclo biológico de los NGI es directo, con una fase parasitaria en el hospedador y otra no parasitaria de vida libre sobre las pasturas (Figura 2). Los huevos son excretados por las hembras adultas con la materia fecal. Una vez en las pasturas, ante condiciones de temperatura media (alrededor de 25°C) y humedad elevada, eclosionan y pasan por tres etapas larvarias: larva 1 (L1), larva 2 (L2) y larva 3 (L3) (fase no parasitaria) (Castells, 2004). Durante los dos primeros estadios, las larvas se alimentan de bacterias, mientras que en la etapa de L3 retienen la cutícula del segundo estadio y no se alimentan, dependiendo de sus reservas acumuladas. Esta larva infectante es una larva activa que es capaz de subir tallos y hojas para ser ingerida por el ovino y cuando esto ocurre se aloja en las paredes del abomaso o intestino donde se transforma en larva 4 y finalmente, luego de 14 días, en adulto (fase parasitaria). El período que transcurre desde la ingestión de las larvas infectantes hasta la aparición de los huevos en las heces es de 16 a 21 días y se conoce como período prepatente. Cuando no existe suficiente cantidad de agua en el ambiente o la temperatura es muy baja para el desarrollo y la sobrevivencia de las larvas, el período prepatente puede demorarse, las larvas L4 frenan su desarrollo en la mucosa del aparato digestivo del ovino y permanecen en estado de reposo o inhibición en un proceso que se conoce como hipobiosis (Abbott et al. 2012). Durante este período los nematodos se mantienen con un metabolismo muy bajo hasta que las condiciones de temperatura y humedad sean favorables para su desarrollo. En ovinos de Uruguay, la hipobiosis se ha descrito para *Haemonchus contortus* (Nari & Cardozo, 1987).

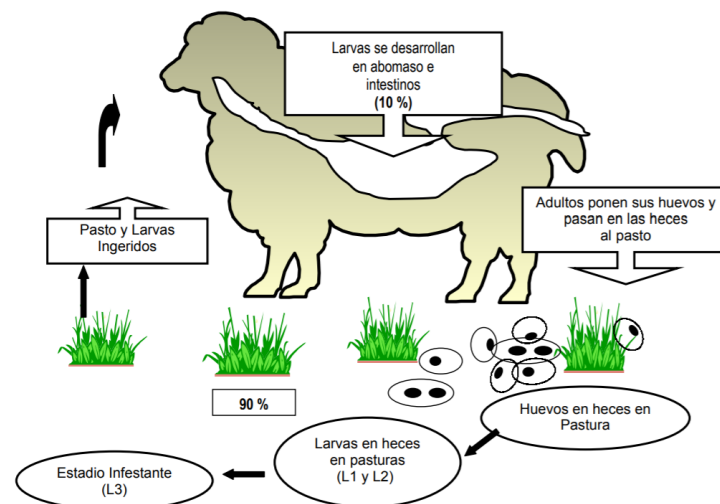


Figura 2: Ciclo biológico de los nematodos gastrointestinales del ovino. Fuente: Mederos, 2002.

2.1.2. Métodos de control

Desde la aparición de los bencimidazoles en los años 60 el control los NGI se ha basado casi exclusivamente en el uso de antihelmínticos de amplio espectro (McMahon et al. 2013). Hoy en día existen en el mercado 5 clases de antihelmínticos disponibles para el control de los NGI de los ovinos: bencimidazoles, imidazotiazoles, lactonas macrocíclicas, derivados de los amino aceto nitrilos y espiroindoles (Castells, 2019). El uso frecuente e incorrecto de estas drogas como único método de control de los NGI ha derivado en la selección de cepas resistentes de parásitos, lo que ha causado que la resistencia antihelmíntica sea un problema generalizado en ovinos a nivel mundial.

Esta situación ha llevado al surgimiento de métodos alternativos de control: el uso de vacunas, el control biológico a través de hongos de los géneros *Artrobotris sp.* o *Duddingtonia sp.*, la utilización de pasturas seguras (tiempo de descanso o pastoreo mixto), el uso de pasturas con alto contenido de taninos condensados, el manejo de la nutrición aumentando los niveles de proteína en la dieta que mejoran la respuesta inmune natural del animal, y la selección de animales genéticamente resistentes a los NGI (Castells, 2005).

Son necesarios métodos de control alternativos no sólo por la resistencia antihelmíntica sino también por la exigencia de los consumidores de reducir el uso de productos químicos en los animales y los residuos químicos en los alimentos y el ambiente. Esta necesidad se refleja en la mayor demanda por productos orgánicos y productos derivados de animales alimentados en base a pasturas (USDA, 2017).

2.2. Resistencia genética a los nematodos gastrointestinales

La habilidad de un animal de resistir las infecciones parasitarias está determinada genéticamente y por lo tanto es variable entre razas y entre individuos de la misma raza (Stear & Wakelin, 1998). La resistencia es la habilidad del animal para iniciar y mantener una respuesta inmune para impedir la infección parasitaria o eliminarla luego de instalada, y es cuantificada por medio del recuento de huevos por gramo de materia fecal o HPG. La resiliencia es la habilidad de mantener niveles productivos aceptables a pesar de la infección y es cuantificada a través de características de desempeño bajo desafío parasitario, por ejemplo, peso vivo o ganancia de peso (Bishop & Stear, 2003).

2.2.1 Criterios de selección

El HPG es el indicador fenotípico de resistencia a NGI más utilizado en el mundo. Este carácter es confiable y relativamente fácil de medir. Es una medida indirecta de la carga parasitaria, la cual está correlacionada positivamente con la carga de parásitos adultos en el tracto gastrointestinal, por lo que es un buen indicador del nivel de resistencia del individuo. La correlación entre HPG y carga parasitaria ha sido reportada como relativamente alta, aunque puede variar dependiendo de la especie de NGI y la raza estudiada. Por ejemplo, Stear et al. (1995) encontraron una correlación de 0,88 en corderos Scottish Blackface infestados con *Ostertagia circumcincta*, y Amarante et al. (1999) encontraron una correlación de 0,7 en corderos Florida Native, Rambouillet y sus cruza, infestados con *Haemonchus* y *Trichostrongylus spp.* Actualmente, el método de referencia para medir el HPG individual es el McMaster modificado, con una sensibilidad de 50 huevos por gramo de materia fecal (Whitlock, 1948).

El muestreo de HPG se realizó según protocolo establecido para las evaluaciones genéticas en Uruguay (Castell, 2008): se extraen dos muestras de materia fecal post-destete de infecciones parasitarias desarrolladas de forma natural, correspondiente a dos ciclos parasitarios independientes, separados entre sí por un tratamiento antihelmíntico. Según los estudios de McClure (2000), la inmunidad es baja hasta los 5-6 meses y se consolida después de los 11 meses. Por esta razón se utiliza en Uruguay una ventana entre los 6 y 12 meses de vida del cordero para realizar las mediciones de HPG (Figura 3), ya que, si se realiza antes de los 5 meses, la inmunidad adquirida todavía aún no

está lo suficientemente desarrollada y si se realiza luego de los 14 meses, es posible que haya poca variación.

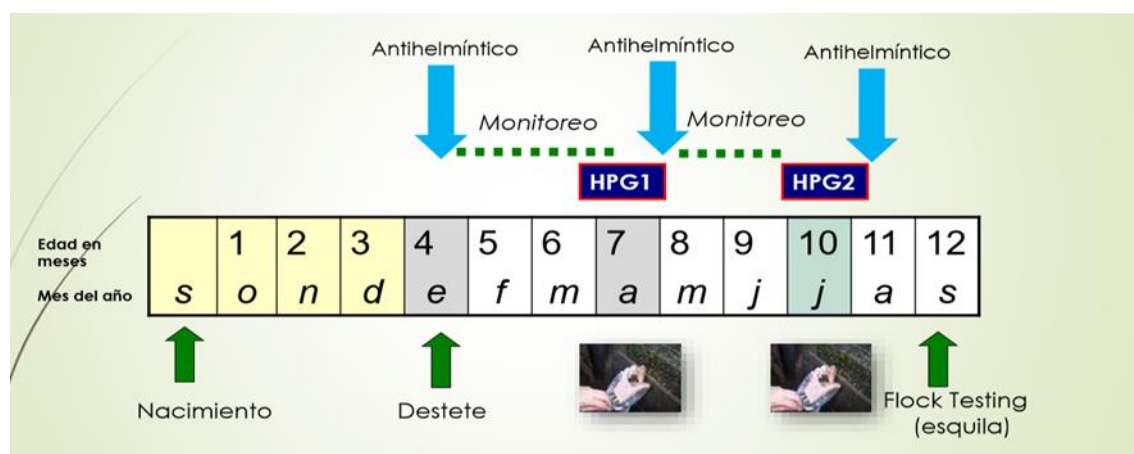


Figura 3: Protocolo de muestreo de huevos por gramo como criterio de selección para evaluaciones genéticas. Fuente: Ciappesoni, 2018

La distribución de HPG es asimétrica, no sigue una distribución normal, con una media mayor a la mediana debido a que la mayoría de los parásitos tienen un recuento bajo mientras una pequeña proporción de parásitos tienen recuentos muy altos (Stear et al. 2007). Para utilizar análisis estadísticos que asumen normalidad y homogeneidad de varianzas es necesario realizar una transformación logarítmica de los recuentos de HPG para que sigan una distribución normal (Eady & Woolaston, 1992).

El HPG es moderadamente heredable ($h^2 \sim 0,3$) con una amplia variabilidad entre individuos (Safari et al. 2005; Bishop & Morris, 2007; Keane et al. 2018). En Uruguay, Castells (2008) estimó una heredabilidad para el HPG en ovinos Corriedale de $0,21 \pm 0,02$, mientras que Ciappesoni & Goldberg (2018) y Balconi Marques et al. (2020) reportaron estimaciones de $0,18 \pm 0,02$. En el caso de la raza Merino Australiano Ciappesoni et al. (2010) estimaron una heredabilidad de $0,18 \pm 0,02$.

A nivel internacional se ha reportado progreso genético en los programas de mejora por selección utilizando el HPG, tanto en majadas experimentales como comerciales (Woolaston et al. 1991; Morris et al. 2000; Greeff & Karlsson, 2006). En Uruguay también se ha observado progreso genético tanto en Corriedale (líneas divergentes del SUL) como en Merino Australiano (Núcleo Unidad Glencoe y población comercial) (Ciappesoni, 2018).

Para evaluar la resistencia a los NGI en ovinos se pueden utilizar tanto infecciones naturales como artificiales (Saddiqi et al. 2011). Las infecciones naturales tienen la ventaja de que presentan mayor heredabilidad (Miller et al. 2006) y permiten distinguir mejor las diferencias raciales debido a que con infecciones artificiales se puede subestimar o sobrestimar la verdadera diferencia entre individuos y entre razas debidas al comportamiento de pastoreo que puede afectar la carga parasitaria (Sayers, 2004). A su vez las infecciones artificiales tienen la ventaja de que permiten una mejor medición de los parámetros inmunológicos evitando la variabilidad del medio ambiente y de los factores de manejo (Sayers, 2004). De cualquier modo, varios estudios han demostrado que ambos tipos de infecciones dan resultados confiables (Saddiqi et al. 2010a; Saddiqi et al. 2010b). Las expresiones de resistencia genética bajo infestación natural y artificial presentan una correlación

genética de 0,87 (Gruner et al. 2004) indicando que están determinadas mayormente por los mismos genes.

2.2.2 Evaluación genética en Uruguay

En Uruguay, desde el año 1994, se incluye la resistencia genética a NGI en la Evaluación Genética Poblacional de la raza Corriedale (www.geneticaovina.com.uy), utilizándose como criterio de selección el HPG medido en los corderos, publicándose el valor genético como diferencia esperada en la progenie (DEP) del recuento de HPG. La conexión entre las cabañas es posible porque comparten carneros en común (carneros de referencia).

En cuanto a las correlaciones genéticas del HPG con características productivas, Castells (2008) estimó correlaciones de -0,15 con el peso de vellón sucio, de -0,08 con el peso de vellón limpio, de -0,35 con el peso vivo y de -0,16 con el diámetro de la fibra.

2.2.3 Modelos matemáticos

El éxito del mejoramiento genético animal depende principalmente de la adopción de métodos de selección precisos con los cuales se van a predecir los valores genéticos de los animales candidatos a selección (De Resende & Rosa Pérez, 1999). Para estimar el mérito genético, se asume que una gran cantidad de genes, cada uno con un pequeño efecto individual (modelo infinitesimal) contribuye a la expresión del fenotipo (Fisher, 1918).

En 1975 Henderson introdujo el método BLUP (Best Linear Unbiased Predictor), que se ha convertido en la metodología más utilizada en las evaluaciones genéticas de especies domésticas. Este método utiliza registros fenotípicos y genealógicos para generar una representación numérica del valor genético del animal (Henderson, 1975).

En el caso concreto de los ovinos, el BLUP-Modelo Animal es el modelo preferido ya que es el que mejor describe los efectos genéticos y ambientales (Carabaño & Alenda, 1990). Una de las principales ventajas del modelo animal es que, a través de la inclusión de la matriz de parentesco, el registro de cada individuo contribuye para la evaluación de todos sus parientes (con el peso adecuado dado por la matriz de parentesco). De esta forma, se pueden obtener estimaciones de valores de cría de todos los individuos, incluso de aquellos que no tengan registros fenotípicos (Carolino, 2017).

2.3 Información genómica en la mejora genética

2.3.1 Selección asistida por marcadores SNP

El desarrollo de tecnologías que permiten la evaluación del material genético a nivel del ADN ha permitido el descubrimiento de la fuente molecular de variación para los caracteres de producción y relacionados a enfermedades (Crawford, 2003). Con la disponibilidad de los primeros marcadores moleculares, se desarrollaron varios estudios experimentales para localizar regiones genómicas (QTL, quantitative trait loci) asociados con caracteres de importancia económica. Varias mutaciones causales de efecto relativamente grande han sido identificadas y mapeadas a regiones cromosómicas específicas, como por ejemplo el gen Callipyge en ovinos que actúa principalmente sobre la

hipertrofia muscular (Bodin et al. 2002). En los 90s se desarrolla la selección asistida por marcadores (MAS, marker assisted selection), y rápidamente se volvió muy popular en esa época. En la MAS, además de usar la información de fenotipos y pedigree, se utilizan marcadores genéticos ligados a los QTL (Cantet et al. 2008). Una de las alternativas a la MAS es la selección asistida por genes (GAS, gene assisted selection), en la cual se utilizan un número reducido de genes para los que se conoce un efecto directo sobre la característica a seleccionar (Villanueva et al. 2002). Tanto la MAS como la GAS no fueron muy eficientes, debido a que la mayoría de los caracteres de importancia económica, son de naturaleza compleja y usualmente controlados por cientos o incluso miles de genes (Knol et al., 2016). Este es el caso de la resistencia genética a los NGI, donde muchos loci con efecto pequeño distribuidos a lo largo de todo el genoma contribuyen a la variación observada (Kemper et al. 2011).

En los últimos años, la secuenciación de los genomas de las especies productivas ha permitido identificar, los polimorfismos de nucleótido simple (SNP, Single Nucleotide Polymorphism) que son las variaciones más comunes en las secuencias de ADN (Ding & Jin, 2009), que resultan de la sustitución de un solo nucleótido. Son considerados los mejores marcadores genéticos porque proveen la mayor densidad y tienen bajas tasas de mutación (Edwards & McCouch, 2007). Además, existe disponibilidad de paneles comerciales de miles de SNP a precios cada vez más accesibles.

Estudios nacionales e internacionales han identificado SNP asociados con resistencia a NGI, los cuales están en proceso de validación. Los SNP reportados por Grasso (2013) están incluidos en un panel desarrollado en Uruguay junto a SNP para verificación de paternidad (panel Charrúa, Affymetrix, 507 SNP; Macedo, 2017). Además, en el marco de un proyecto internacional, la Agencia Internacional de Energía Atómica reportó 169 SNP relacionados con la resistencia a NGI (Periasamy et al. 2014), y en un estudio reciente, Raschia et al. (2021) encontraron asociaciones significativas entre 7 de esos SNP con la característica HPG en corderos raza Corriedale infestados artificialmente.

2.3.2 Selección genómica

En el 2001 Meuwissen et al. describieron la utilización de miles de marcadores genéticos (de tipo microsatélites) a lo largo de todo el genoma para predecir los valores genéticos. A este método de selección se le conoce como Selección Genómica (SG). La SG es una forma de selección asistida por marcadores, donde un gran número de marcadores genéticos (actualmente de tipo SNP), distribuidos en todo el genoma, que se encuentran en desequilibrio de ligamiento (LD, Linkage Disequilibrium) con regiones genómicas asociadas a características cuantitativas (Meuwissen et al. 2001). El procedimiento consiste en estimar los efectos de todos los SNP simultáneamente a partir de individuos con registros fenotípicos y genómicos (población de referencia) y posteriormente estos efectos se utilizan para predecir los valores de cría genómicos (GEBV, Genomic Estimated Breeding Value) de los candidatos a selección que aún no tienen registros fenotípicos (Goddard & Hayes, 2007). La correlación r entre los fenotipos estimados (GEBV) y los observados (fenotipos ajustados) se denomina predictibilidad o habilidad predictiva. La precisión de la predicción genómica se describe como r/h , donde h es la raíz cuadrada de la heredabilidad (Legarra et al. 2008; VanRaden, 2008).

El efecto de cada SNP se puede estimar utilizando diferentes supuestos sobre la distribución a priori de sus efectos (Aguilar et al. 2010). En el método BLUP genómico (GBLUP) se asume una distribución normal con igual varianza para los efectos de los marcadores (Meuwissen et al. 2001;

Habier et al. 2007; VanRaden, 2008). Estudios realizados por Hayes et al. (2009), VanRaden et al. (2009) y Cole et al. (2009) han demostrado que asumir igual varianza para cada SNP produjo poca o ninguna pérdida de precisión para la mayoría de los caracteres.

En 2009 Misztal et al. propusieron integrar la información genómica en una evaluación genética de un solo paso (ssGBLUP, single-step GBLUP) donde la matriz de relaciones de pedigree (A) se combina con la matriz de relaciones genómicas (G) basada en la información de los SNP para formar una matriz H (Legarra et al. 2009; Aguilar et al. 2010; Christensen & Lund, 2010). La idea central es utilizar toda la información disponible (fenotipos, genotipos y pedigree) en un solo modelo para predecir los GEBV para todos los individuos simultáneamente (Fangmann, 2018). Esto permite integrar a la estimación de los efectos de los SNP aquellos animales que cuentan con fenotipo para la característica de interés, aunque no tengan información genómica.

2.4 Exactitud o precisión del EBV

La exactitud o precisión de los valores de cría estimados es un parámetro importante en el mejoramiento genético animal por 2 razones (Bijma, 2012):

- 1) la respuesta a la selección (ΔG) es proporcional a la precisión (r) (Falconer & Mackay, 1996), por lo que la precisión refleja la ganancia genética potencial:

$$\Delta G = \frac{(r \cdot i \cdot \sigma A)}{I}$$

Donde sigma A es el desvío genético aditivo de la característica, i es la intensidad de selección e I es el intervalo generacional.

De este modo el uso de información genómica en la estimación de los valores de cría permite incrementar de forma significativa la ganancia genética a través del aumento en la precisión de los EBV. Esto además es factible en animales más jóvenes, lo que contribuye a reducir el intervalo generacional, maximizando el cociente r/I y aumentando delta G (Meuwissen et al. 2001).

- 2) la precisión refleja la credibilidad de un EBV individual, en la medida que a mayores naes el EBV se acerca más al verdadero valor genético, por lo que se utiliza como una medida de riesgo al elegir los padres de la siguiente generación.

La exactitud o precisión del modelo (acc , accuracy) se define como la correlación teórica entre el valor de cría verdadero y el valor de cría estimado, y puede obtenerse para cada individuo como una función de la varianza del error de predicción (PEV) y el coeficiente de consanguinidad (F) (Aguilar et al. 2020):

$$acc = \sqrt{1 - \frac{PEV_i}{(1 + F_i)\sigma_u^2}}$$

2.5 Antecedentes en ovinos

En el año 2009 la compañía Illumina desarrolla el *OvineSNP50 BeadChip* (www.illumina.com), un panel de 54.000 SNP desarrollado como parte del International Sheep Genomics Consortium (ISGC; www.sheepmap.org; Kijas et al. 2009) lo que permitió que se comenzara a utilizar información genómica para las evaluaciones genéticas en ovinos (Rupp et al. 2016). Diferentes estudios mostraron que, a pesar de las relativamente pequeñas poblaciones de entrenamiento, las precisiones de los EBV utilizando GBLUP fueron mayores que utilizando solo BLUP, aunque estas diferencias no fueron muy grandes. En Australia, Daetwyler et al. (2010, 2012a, 2012b) reportaron aumentos en promedio entre 0,05 y 0,10 para características de carcasa y calidad de carne, y de entre 0,05 y 0,27 para características de carne, lana y tamaño de camada en Nueva Zelanda (Auvray et al. 2014). En Francia, Baloche et al. (2014) reportaron aumentos de entre 0,10 y 0,20 en características de producción de leche.

A pesar de estos resultados, Daetwyler et al. (2012b) mostraron que la ganancia en precisión estaba correlacionada con el tamaño de la población de referencia y la heredabilidad de la característica por lo que sugirieron que la precisión y la ganancia genética esperada pueden aumentar si se aumenta el tamaño de la población de entrenamiento. Estas ganancias menores con respecto a los bovinos probablemente se deban al menor LD en ovinos debido a un mayor tamaño efectivo de la población (N_e) (Rupp et al. 2016), que en el caso de Corriedale sería de entre 400 y 600 (Ciappesoni & Goldberg, 2012). Cuando se utilizó el método ssGBLUP, la ganancia en precisión para características de producción de leche aumentó entre 5 a 30% en comparación con el BLUP tradicional (dependiendo de la raza), aun cuando la población de entrenamiento era pequeña (entre 100 y 1300) (Legarra et al. 2014).

2.6 Estudios de asociación

Los estudios de asociación de genoma completo (GWAS, Genome Wide Association Study) se utilizan para identificar genes candidatos y variantes moleculares asociadas con diferentes características fenotípicas (Gebreselassie et al. 2019). Una gran ventaja del GWAS es que no es necesario un conocimiento previo profundo de los procesos fisiológicos y bioquímicos involucrados en la manifestación de los fenotipos estudiados (Wang et al. 2005).

El método más frecuente de GWAS es la regresión fija de un solo marcador en un modelo lineal mixto. En este método los SNP se toman como covariables y la matriz de relaciones genéticas corrige el resto de los efectos genéticos. Este método se basa en el proceso de des-regresión que es una aproximación en la que se pierde información y puede producir inexactitudes (Aguilar et al. 2019). Con la metodología ssGBLUP se pueden estimar al mismo tiempo los EBV y los efectos de los marcadores, y además corregir automáticamente por la estructura de la población (Legarra et al. 2009; Misztal et al. 2009). Además, este método permite incluir las asociaciones genéticas encontradas en el pedigree de animales que no fueron genotipados (Wang et al. 2012). En este artículo este autor demostró que los efectos de los SNP pueden derivarse de los GEBV provenientes de la evaluación principal ssGBLUP. Estos efectos de los SNP son los que se utilizan después para el análisis de GWAS. Esta metodología de GWAS se denomina ssGWAS (Single-step GWAS).

El primer GWAS en ovinos se realizó para entender la base genética de los tipos de cuernos en ovejas Soay salvajes (Johnston et al. 2011) y desde entonces se han realizado este tipo de estudios para buscar asociaciones con características productivas (crecimiento, peso corporal, calidad de

carne, peso de carcasa, etc) y reproductivas (tasa ovulatoria, tamaño de camada, edad a la pubertad, etc).

Para el caso específico de la resistencia genética a los NGI, la revisión realizada por Benavides et al. (2016) señala que se han encontrado 126 marcadores asociados significativamente con HPG y otros caracteres relacionados a la parasitosis por NGI, para los parásitos *H. contortus*, *T. circumcincta* y *T. colubriformis*.

2.7 Criterios de evaluación de modelos

Para comparar posibles modelos pueden utilizarse varios indicadores, uno de ellos es el Criterio de Información de Akaike (AIC, Akaike Information Criterion; Akaike, 1974), que es un método matemático para evaluar que tan bien un modelo se ajusta a los datos en comparación con otros modelos para los mismos datos. Es por tanto una estimación relativa, lo que significa que el puntaje AIC es útil solamente en comparación con otros puntajes AIC para los mismos datos, siendo el puntaje más bajo el mejor. El mejor modelo es el que explica la mayor cantidad de variación utilizando la menor cantidad posible de variables independientes (Burnham & Anderson, 2002).

Se calcula utilizando la siguiente fórmula:

$$AIC = 2k - 2\ln(L)$$

- $2\ln(L)$ es la bondad de ajuste (L es la máxima verosimilitud o maximum likelihood)
- k es la medida de la complejidad (número de parámetros del modelo)

3. PLANTEAMIENTO DEL PROBLEMA

El sistema de producción predominante en Uruguay es a cielo abierto, donde la base de la dieta es el forraje proveniente de las pasturas nativas. Debido a las condiciones climáticas favorables, el ganado puede pastorear todo el año. Esto tiene la desventaja de que los animales están expuestos todo el año a infestaciones con NGI. El hecho de que tradicionalmente los métodos de prevención y control de los NGI se han basado casi exclusivamente en el uso de drogas de síntesis química, ha conducido a la aparición de NGI resistentes a esas drogas. Esta situación ha conducido al surgimiento de estrategias de control alternativas, dentro de las cuales se encuentra la selección de animales genéticamente resistentes a los NGI.

La información genómica es una herramienta complementaria en las evaluaciones genéticas de características que presentan baja o moderada heredabilidad, o cuya medición resulta de difícil adopción por los productores, como es el caso del HPG. El uso de información genómica en la estimación de los valores de cría permite incrementar en forma significativa la ganancia genética a través del aumento en la precisión de los EBV en animales jóvenes (Meuwissen et al. 2001).

4. HIPÓTESIS

El uso de información molecular mejora la precisión de la estimación de los méritos genéticos de resistencia genética a NGI en comparación con la evaluación genética tradicional.

5. OBJETIVOS

5.1 Objetivo General

Analizar el aporte de diferentes paneles de SNP en la mejora genética de resistencia genética a los NGI a través de:

- 1) estudio del incremento de la precisión del EBV en comparación con la evaluación genética tradicional, y
- 2) estudio de la asociación con regiones genómicas con efecto en esta característica.

En ambos estudios se compararán un set de 170 SNP de origen internacional, un panel de baja densidad en desarrollo en el país (507 SNP) y un panel de mediana densidad (50k) disponible comercialmente.

5.2 Objetivos Específicos

- Utilización del criterio AIC para evaluar el modelo con inclusión de información molecular con mejor ajuste
- Comparación de las precisiones de los EBV obtenidas con la evaluación genética tradicional y las obtenidas con incorporación de información genómica para las características de HPG y diámetro de fibra
- Cuantificación del impacto del uso de genómica en las estimaciones de los EBV a partir de las correlaciones entre sus exactitudes con genómica y sin genómica
- Identificación de regiones genómicas asociadas a la resistencia a NGI, en base al ssGWAS de HPG utilizando cada uno de los set o paneles de SNP considerados.

6. ESTRATEGIA DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN

En este trabajo se utilizaron registros de animales con información fenotípica (datos de HPG, diámetro de fibra), genealógica y genómica. Se contó con 454 animales genotipados con 170 SNP (Agencia Internacional de Energía Atómica), 711 genotipados con el panel de 507 SNP (Grasso, 2013; Macedo, 2017) y 383 genotipados con tres paneles distintos de 50K (dos de Illumina y uno de Thermo Fisher).

Para el objetivo general 1, los EBV tradicionales se estimaron en base a los datos fenotípicos y genealógicos, a través de la metodología BLUP (Henderson, 1975). Las predicciones genómicas fueron realizadas en base al ssGBLUP (Misztal et al. 2009; Legarra et al. 2009; Aguilar et al. 2010). Las precisiones de los valores de cría se estimaron en base a Aguilar et al. (2020). Todas estas estimaciones se realizaron utilizando el paquete de programas BLUPF90 (Misztal et al. 2002).

En el primer trabajo se estudió el aporte de diferentes densidades de SNP en la mejora genética de ovinos Corriedale a través del aumento de la precisión de los EBV. Las características estudiadas fueron HPG y diámetro de fibra. Si bien el eje de este estudio es la resistencia genética a NGI, cuyo criterio de selección es el HPG, se incluyó diámetro de fibra a efectos comparativos ya que es una característica de alta heredabilidad y la precisión de los EBV se ve afectada por este parámetro (Hayes

et al. 2009). Además, se utilizó el AIC para comparar el modelo BLUP con el modelo ssGBLUP con diferentes pesos asignados a la matriz de relaciones genómicas.

Este estudio está aceptado para publicación en la revista *Agrociencia* y se presenta en el capítulo 7 con el formato de dicha revista.

En el segundo trabajo, correspondiente al segundo componente del objetivo general, se realizaron los estudios de asociación con la característica HPG utilizando la metodología ssGWAS (Wang et al. 2012) para identificar regiones genómicas asociadas a resistencia genética a NGL. Se analizaron por separado cada set o panel de marcadores. Para las regiones relevantes, se buscaron genes candidatos asociados a HPG, y en base a éstos se analizó procesos biológicos involucrados.

Este estudio fue enviado a la revista *Genes* y se presenta en el capítulo 8 con el formato de dicha revista.

6.1 Presentaciones en congresos en modalidad póster

- 1.** AUPA poster artículo 1 (Anexo I)
- 2.** AUPA poster artículo 2 (Anexo II)

7. SNP arrays evaluation as tools in genetic improvement in Corriedale sheep in Uruguay

Evaluación de paneles de SNP como herramientas en la mejora genética de ovinos Corriedale en Uruguay

Avaliação de painéis de SNP como ferramentas em melhoramento genético de ovinos Corriedale no Uruguai

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7.1 Abstract

One control strategy for gastrointestinal nematodes (GIN) is genetic selection. This study's objective was to compare eggs per gram of feces (FEC) and fiber diameter (FD) estimated breeding values (EBV) and genomic EBV (GEBV) in Corriedale breed. Analysis included 19547 lambs with data and 454, 711 and 383 genotypes from 170, 507 and 50K SNP chips respectively. A univariate animal model was used for EBV and GEBV estimation which included contemporary group, type of birth and dam age as fixed effects and age at recording as covariate. Differential weights (α) were considered in the genomic relationship matrix (G), and the best fit models were identified using Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC), which were later used for GEBV and accuracies estimation. The use of α only impacted on low density SNP chips. No differences were observed in mean accuracies for the whole population. However, in the genotyped subgroup accuracies increased by 2% with the 170 SNP chip ($\alpha=0.25$), and 5% ($\alpha=0.5$) and 14% ($\alpha=0.75$) with the 507 SNP chip. No differences were observed in FD EBV and GEBV mean accuracies. These results show that it is possible to increase GEBV accuracies despite the use of low-density chips.

Keywords: accuracy; Corriedale; FEC; GEBV

Resumen

Una alternativa para el control de los nematodos gastrointestinales (NGI) es la selección genética. El objetivo de este trabajo fue comparar las precisiones de los valores de cría (EBV) y los EBV genómicos (GEBV) del recuento de huevos

por gramo en heces (HPG) y diámetro de fibra (DF) en la raza Corriedale. El análisis incluyó 19547 corderos con datos fenotípicos y 454, 711 y 383 genotipados con paneles o chips de 170, 507 y 50K SNP, respectivamente. Los EBV y GEBV se estimaron con un modelo animal univariado que incluyó los efectos fijos grupo contemporáneo, tipo de nacimiento y edad de la madre, y edad al registro como covariable. Se consideraron pesos diferenciales (α) en la matriz de relaciones genómicas, identificándose los modelos con mejor ajuste con el criterio de información de Akaike (AIC), que fueron utilizados para la estimación de los GEBV y sus precisiones. El uso de α solo impactó en el ajuste con paneles de baja densidad. No se encontraron diferencias en las precisiones promedio de la población total. En cambio, en el subgrupo de animales genotipados las precisiones aumentaron un 2% con 170 SNP ($\alpha=0.25$), y con 507 SNP 5% ($\alpha=0.5$) y 14% ($\alpha=0.75$). No hubo diferencias en precisiones de los EBV y GEBV de DF. Los resultados muestran que es posible aumentar las precisiones de los GEBV aún con paneles de baja densidad.

Palabras clave: Corriedale; GEBV; HPG; precisión

Resumo

Uma alternativa para o controle de nematóides gastrointestinais (NGI) é a seleção genética. O objetivo deste trabalho foi comparar as precisões dos valores genéticos estimados (EBV) e dos EBVs genômicos (GEBV) da contagem de ovos por grama de fezes (OPG) e diâmetro de fibra (DF) na raça Corriedale. A análise incluiu 19547 cordeiros com dados e 454, 711 e 383 genotipados de 170, 507 e 50K SNPs, respectivamente. Foram estimados os EBV e GEBV com um modelo animal univariado que incluiu efeitos fixos de grupo contemporâneo, tipo de nascimento e idade da mãe e idade no registro (covariável). Pesos diferenciais (α) foram considerados na matriz de relações genômicas, identificando os modelos com melhor ajuste via critério de informação de Akaike (AIC), os quais foram utilizados para estimar o GEBV e suas precisões. O uso de α somente impactou no ajuste com painéis de baixa densidade. Não foram encontradas diferenças na precisão média da população total. Em contraste, no subgrupo de animais genotipados as precisões aumentaram 2% com 170 SNPs ($\alpha = 0.25$), e com 507 SNPs 5% ($\alpha = 0.5$) e 14% ($\alpha = 0.75$). Não houve diferenças na precisão de EBV e GEBV de DF. Os resultados mostram que é possível aumentar a precisão de GEBVs mesmo que se utilizem painéis de baixa densidade.

Palavras-chave: Corriedale; GEBV; OPG; precisão

7.2 Introduction

Uruguay's main production system is based on natural pastures. Because of favorable climatic conditions sheep can graze all year long but this has the disadvantage that animals are exposed to gastrointestinal nematodes (GIN). These are the most prevalent parasitic infections in grazing sheep worldwide, which cause important economic losses to the sheep industry, because of decrease in meat and wool production as well as increase in costs associated to anthelmintic control. In Australia Lane et al.⁽¹⁾ estimated losses of AUD 436 million per year.

Anthelmintic drugs are used as the main control method, but its frequent and indiscriminate use has favored anthelmintic resistance development. This situation resulted in the onset of alternative control strategies, one of them being selection of genetically resistant animals. Animal's ability to

resist parasitic infections is genetically determined, with variability between breeds as well as between individuals from the same breed⁽²⁾. Resistance is the ability of an animal to initiate and maintain an immune response to prevent or eliminate a parasitic infection after it is installed, and it is quantified through nematodes egg count per gram of feces (FEC). In Uruguay, since 1994, GIN genetic resistance is included in the Corriedale National Genetic Evaluation (www.geneticaovina.com.uy), using FEC measured in lambs as selection criterion and estimated breeding value (EBV) estimation with the Best Linear Unbiased Predictor methodology (BLUP)⁽³⁾. FEC is a moderately heritable trait ($h^2 \sim 0.3$) with a great variability between individuals⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾.

Nowadays, in most countries, EBV estimation for selection of genetically superior animals is based on genealogical and phenotypic records, but in the last

years, medium-density single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) arrays have emerged as an additional source of information. Genomic information is a complementary tool in genetic evaluations for low heritability, long generation interval or difficult to measure traits. Genomic selection (GS) is a type of marker assisted selection where a great number of genetic markers (mostly SNP) distributed along the genome are in linkage disequilibrium (LD) with genomic regions associated to quantitative trait loci (QTL)⁽⁷⁾. The procedure consists of estimating all SNP effects simultaneously from individuals with phenotypic and genotypic information (reference population) and later using these effects to predict genomic EBV (GEBV) from selection candidates that don't have phenotypic records⁽⁸⁾.

Each SNP effect can be estimated using different assumptions about its distribution⁽⁹⁾. In genomic BLUP (GBLUP) a normal distribution with equal variances for the markers effects is assumed⁽⁷⁾⁽¹⁰⁾⁽¹¹⁾. Investigations carried out by Hayes et al.⁽¹²⁾, VanRaden et al.⁽¹³⁾ and Cole et al.⁽¹⁴⁾ have showed that assuming equal variance for each SNP produced little or no loss of accuracy for most traits. In 2009, Misztal et al.⁽¹⁵⁾ proposed to integrate genomic information in a single step genetic evaluation using single step genomic BLUP (ssGBLUP) where the additive relationship matrix (A) is combined with the SNP based genomic relationship matrix (G) to create an H matrix⁽¹⁶⁾⁽⁹⁾⁽¹⁷⁾. Main idea is to use all available information (phenotypes, genotypes and pedigree) in a model to predict GEBV for all individuals simultaneously⁽¹⁸⁾.

The use of genomic information in GEBV estimation allows to significantly increase genetic gain through EBV accuracy increase in young animals⁽⁷⁾. Nowadays, GS has been implemented in several sheep breeding programs in Australia⁽¹⁹⁾⁽²⁰⁾, New Zealand⁽²¹⁾ and France⁽²²⁾⁽²³⁾. Concerning EBV accuracies, Auvray et al.⁽²¹⁾ reported increases between 0.09 and 0.37 when using GBLUP instead of BLUP, for eight traits and four different breeds, with a genotyped population of 13420 animals. Accuracies for milk production trait increased from 0.26 to 0.42 when ssGBLUP method was used⁽²³⁾ and between 0.05 and 0.3 increases for the same trait in six different dairy sheep breeds⁽²⁴⁾. Regarding FEC trait, Torres et al.⁽²⁵⁾ reported EBV accuracies increases between 0.046 and 0.073.

In 2014, Periasamy et al.⁽²⁶⁾ identified 170 SNP associated with 76 candidate genes involved in immune response to GIN resistance and Raschia et al.⁽²⁷⁾ found that eight of them were significantly associated with FEC in Corriedale sheep under artificial infection. In turn, INIA developed a 507 SNP chip with the Affymetrix company that contains 174 SNP related to FEC trait and 258 paternity SNP (FMV_2_2011_1_6356_ANII project)⁽²⁸⁾.

Even though this study is focused on GIN genetic resistance, with FEC as selection criterion, we also included fiber diameter (FD) for comparison reasons since it is a highly heritable trait and EBV accuracies are affected by this parameter⁽²⁹⁾. This trait is also a relevant selection breeding objective for the Corriedale breed in Uruguay⁽³⁰⁾.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the contribution of three different SNP arrays in GEBV accuracy increase as compared to traditional genetic evaluation for FEC and FD traits. Due to the small number of genotyped animals, this study was focused on GEBV accuracies.

7.3 Materials and Methods

7.3.1 Phenotypic Data

From 2000 to 2019, FEC and FD records were collected from 19547 Corriedale animals belonging to 29 farms (24 stud flocks, 3 Experimental Units and 2 Progeny Testing Centrals). Genealogical information from 40056 animals was provided by Uruguay's Rural Association (ARU) and the Uruguayan Corriedale Breeders Society, who also provided the performance and management data.

FEC as well as FD traits are routinely registered at the National Genetic Evaluation, but the first one is not mandatory. FEC sampling was performed at 278 ± 69 days mean age according to the protocol used for genetic evaluations⁽³⁰⁾ and FD sampling was made at shearing (364 ± 42 days mean age). Due to FEC's non normal distribution, data was transformed to natural logarithm, $\text{Log}_e(\text{FEC}+100)$ as described in Ciappesoni et al.⁽³¹⁾. Descriptive statistics for both traits are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for fecal egg counts (FEC), $\text{Log}_e(\text{FEC}+100)$ and fiber diameter (FD) for N=19547.

| Trait | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|----------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| FEC | 1310 | 2158 | 0 | 37400 |
| Log _e (FEC+100) | 6.49 | 1.24 | 4.61 | 10.53 |
| FD (μ) | 24.98 | 3.03 | 16.60 | 38.80 |

Fecal samples were collected from the animal's rectum using plastic bags, identified, stored with ice gel packs and taken to the laboratory as described at the Instituto Nacional de Investigación Agropecuaria (INIA) N°6 Card⁽³²⁾. Samples were processed at parasitology laboratories at INIA Tacuarembó, INIA Las Brujas or Secretariado Uruguayo de la Lana (SUL), where FEC were assessed using a modified McMaster technique with a sensitivity of 100 eggs per gram of feces⁽³³⁾.

7.3.2 Genotypic Data

Blood samples were collected by jugular's vein puncture using tubes with K₂ EDTA anticoagulant (BD Vacutainer, USA) and afterwards DNA was extracted according to Medrano et al.⁽³⁴⁾ protocol with modifications. NanoDrop 8000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Scientific, USA) was used for DNA quantification and purity evaluation. DNA integrity was checked with a 1% agarose gel with 0.5X TBE buffer (Tris-Borate-EDTA, Thermo Scientific, USA) during 25 minutes at 100V. Finally, DNA samples were stored at -80°C until genotyping.

For this study, genotypes from three different SNP chips were used: 454 animals with 170 SNP (International Atomic Energy)⁽²⁶⁾, 711 animals with 507 SNP (Charrúa Panel, Affymetrix)⁽³⁵⁾⁽³⁶⁾ and 383 animals with 50K SNP (Illumina Ovine SNP50 BeadChip v1 and v2, Affymetrix Oviser Axiom 50K). For the 50K chip, 33236 SNP in common between Illumina and Affymetrix platforms were used.

For genomic data quality control PREGSF90 program was used⁽³⁷⁾⁽³⁸⁾ and consisted in the exclusion of sexual markers, monomorphic, minor allele frequency < 0.05 and call rate < 90%; and the exclusion of individuals with call rate < 90%. SNP and individuals after quality control are presented in Table 2. Regarding SNP in common, only the 507 SNP chip has some markers from the 50K SNP chip (91 SNP).

Table 2. Number of SNP and individuals after quality control. G matrix weights (α) and A matrix weights (β) calculated according to VanRaden⁽¹¹⁾ for 50K, 507 and 170 SNP chips.

| Chip | SNP | Animals | α | β |
|------|-------|---------|------|------|
| 50K | 29325 | 375 | 0.99 | 0.01 |
| 507 | 373 | 702 | 0.75 | 0.25 |
| 170 | 148 | 454 | 0.75 | 0.25 |

7.3.3 Animal Welfare

Fecal samples extraction protocol as well as blood extraction protocol were approved by INIA's Animal Ethics Committee (Approval number INIA_2018.2).

7.3.4 Statistical Analysis

EBVs were estimated based on phenotypic and pedigree records through BLUP methodology. GEBVs were estimated based on phenotypic and pedigree records as well as genotypes through ssGBLUP methodology. Variance components were estimated using the AIREML algorithm (Average Information Restricted Maximum Likelihood)⁽³⁹⁾ and afterwards used as initial values for EBV and GEBV prediction using BLUPF90 family of programs⁽⁴⁰⁾.

For breeding values estimation and (co)variance components a univariate animal model was used:

$$y = Xb + Zu + e$$

where y is the observations vector for each trait (Log_e (FEC+100) or FD); X is the fixed effects incidence matrix; b is the vector of fixed effects; Z is the additive genetic effects incidence matrix; u is the vector of direct additive genetic effects and e is the residual effects vector. Under the infinitesimal model, it is assumed that $u \sim N(0, A \sigma_u^2)$ with pedigree-based approach, and that $u \sim N(0, H \sigma_u^2)$ with genomic approach (being σ_u^2 the additive genetic variance) and that $e \sim N(0, I \sigma_e^2)$. Fixed effects included in the model were as follows: 467 contemporary groups (birth year, sex, stud-flock, and management group), type of birth (2 levels: unique or multiple), mother's age (3 levels: 2, 3 and ≥ 4 years) and age at recording as covariate (age at FEC and age at shearing).

H is the relationship matrix that combines pedigree and genomic information and was estimated using ssGBLUP. This matrix inverse was calculated according to Aguilar et al.⁽⁹⁾:

$$H^{-1} = A^{-1} + \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & G^{-1} - A_{22}^{-1} \end{pmatrix}$$

where A^{-1} is the inverse of the pedigree relationship matrix, G^{-1} is the inverse of the

genomic matrix, and A_{22}^{-1} is the inverse of the pedigree relationship matrix of genotyped animals.

G matrix calculation was computed according to VanRaden's⁽¹¹⁾:

$$Gw = w * G + (1 - w) * A_{22}$$

where the weighted G matrix (Gw) is used with a formula that includes the number of SNPs (m):

$$w = \frac{0.05^2}{\left(0.05^2 + \frac{0.125}{m}\right)'}$$

PREGSF90 program⁽³⁷⁾ uses the same formula but with α and β :

$$G = \alpha G + \beta A_{22}$$

Default values are $\alpha=0.95$ (G matrix weight) and $\beta=0.05$ (A matrix weight). These weights are used for G matrix blending, to make it positive definite so it can be inverted⁽¹¹⁾. Calculated weights for 170, 507 and 50K SNP are presented in Table 2.

The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC, Akaike Information Criterion)⁽⁴¹⁾ was used for model comparison:

$$AIC = 2k - 2\ln(L)$$

where $2\ln(L)$ is the model's goodness of fit (L is the maximum likelihood) and k is a complexity measurement (number of estimated parameters).

AIC values were estimated with the AIREML algorithm. BLUP and ssGBLUP models were compared with different weights assigned to G matrix, and delta AIC was calculated (ΔAIC ; difference between two values). According to Burnham & Anderson⁽⁴²⁾, models with ΔAIC less than 2 are equivalent, between 4 and 7 are somewhat different and >10 are conclusively different. Afterwards, only models with ΔAIC higher than 10 were considered, this is to say, models where including SNP information showed a difference compared to BLUP.

To understand the impact of these models on the genetic evaluation, EBV and GEBV accuracies were estimated for the different chips, according to Aguilar et al.⁽⁴³⁾:

$$acc = \sqrt{1 - \frac{PEV_i}{(1 + F_i)\sigma_u^2}}$$

where σ_u^2 is the additive genetic variance, PEV_i is the prediction error variance of animal i and F_i is the

consanguinity coefficient.

Afterwards, a paired Student's t-test was used to check if these accuracies were statistically significant.

Also, correlation between elements outside the diagonal of G and A_{22} matrices were assessed to detect conflicts between pedigree and the genomic matrix. This correlation is expected to be between 0.5 and 0.9, and values higher than 0.9 show that the information between G and A_{22} matrices is very similar⁽⁴⁴⁾.

7.4 Results

Initially, FEC and FD genetic and residual variances, and heritability estimates were assessed (Table 3) and later used as initial values in breeding values estimation.

Table 3. Additive genetic variance (gV), residual variance (rV) and heritability (h^2) estimates for Log_e (FEC+100) and fiber diameter (FD) with standard errors.

| Trait | gV | rV | h^2 |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Log_e (FEC+100) | 0.16±0.02 | 0.72±0.01 | 0.18±0.02 |
| FD | 1.89±0.10 | 1.88±0.07 | 0.50±0.02 |

Afterwards, AIC for each model was calculated. For FD, only the model with 50K SNP showed ΔAIC values different from BLUP. Furthermore, for FEC this model didn't show any difference, but the models with 170 SNP and 507 SNP did (Table 4). In the case of models with 507 SNP, the ones with 0.25, 0.5 y 0.75 α values and the model with 170 SNP (with $\alpha=0.25$) showed differences for this trait.

Table 4. Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and delta AIC (ΔAIC) values for BLUP and ssGBLUP models (with different weights assigned to G matrix) for Log_e (FEC+100) and fiber diameter (FD) for 170, 507 and 50K SNP.

| | Log_e (FEC+100) | | FD | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------|--------------|
| | AIC | ΔAIC | AIC | ΔAIC |
| BLUP | 52489.5 | | 78358.8 | |
| 50K SNP $\alpha=0.75$ | 52484.6 | 4.9 | 78337.8 | 21 |
| 50K SNP $\alpha=0.95$ | 52490.2 | -0.7 | 78336.1 | 22.7 |
| 50K SNP $\alpha=0.99$ | 52491.7 | -2.2 | 78335.9 | 22.9 |
| 507 SNP $\alpha=0.25$ | 52473.1 | 16.4 | 78357.6 | 1.2 |
| 507 SNP $\alpha=0.50$ | 52473.5 | 16 | 78366.4 | -7.6 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| 507 SNP $\alpha=0.75$ | 52478.6 | 10.9 | 78386 | -27.2 |
| 507 SNP $\alpha=0.95$ | 52487.4 | 2.1 | 78417.8 | -59 |
| 170 SNP $\alpha=0.25$ | 52479.4 | 10.1 | 78357.3 | 1.4 |
| 170 SNP $\alpha=0.50$ | 52486.5 | 3 | 78369.4 | -10.6 |
| 170 SNP $\alpha=0.75$ | 52501.6 | -12.1 | 78396.7 | -37.9 |
| 170 SNP $\alpha=0.95$ | 52525.9 | -36.4 | 78445.9 | -87.1 |

To explore which of the AIC selected models optimizes trait selection, mean accuracies for the whole population and for genotyped animals were estimated. BLUP estimations were compared to ssGBLUP (with different weights assigned to G matrix) (Table 5, in Supplementary material).

No differences between EBV and GEBV were found for the whole population, with mean accuracy values of 0.46 and 0.61 for FEC and FD respectively. It was observed that EBV mean accuracies were higher for the genotyped group compared to the whole population, but this is not surprising since samples that are selected for genotyping are the most informative animals (fathers and dams with many offspring) and this impacts directly on the accuracies.

When whole population's EBV and GEBV accuracies were plotted (for models selected with AIC) it was observed that for FEC, there were animals that lowered their accuracies when the 170 and 507 SNP chips with $\alpha=0.25$ were used (Figures 1 and 2, in Supplementary material) but this tendency decreased when the 507 SNP chip with $\alpha=0.5$ y $\alpha=0.75$ was used (Figure 2, in Supplementary material). The 507 SNP chip with $\alpha=0.75$ showed the highest increases in accuracies. Concerning dams not genotyped with genotyped offspring, higher accuracies were observed when the 507 SNP chip with higher α was used (Figures 1 and 2, in Supplementary material).

Regarding FD, no differences were observed when different α values were used (Figure 3, in Supplementary material).

On the other hand, differences in accuracies were observed within the genotyped subset (Table 5, in Supplementary material). Concerning FEC trait, 50K SNP chip didn't increase estimated breeding value mean accuracies and neither did the 507 SNP chip with $\alpha=0.25$. By contrast, 170 SNP chip with $\alpha=0.25$ and 507 SNP with $\alpha=0.5$ and $\alpha=0.75$ increased GEBV accuracies by 3, 7 and 16% respectively. These percentages are not comparable between chips since only 3% of animals were genotyped with the three chips.

For animals genotyped with both 170 and 507 SNP chips (n=305) it was observed that for FEC trait

accuracies lowered slightly but were still significant for 170 SNP with $\alpha=0.25$ and 507 SNP with $\alpha=0.5$ and $\alpha=0.75$, with 2, 5 and 14% increases respectively. For 507 SNP with $\alpha=0.25$ no difference in GEBV accuracy was observed.

Scatter plots for animals genotyped with both 170 and 507 SNP chips for FEC (Figures 4 and 5, in Supplementary material) showed a strong positive correlation between EBV and GEBV mean accuracies. In addition, it was observed a lower correlation coefficient and a higher accuracy increase when the 507 SNP chip was used and as α was increased. Also, in these plots it can be observed that even though a high proportion of animals increased their GEBV accuracies, others with phenotypic data, lowered its accuracies when ssGBLUP was used, both with the 170 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.25$) as well as with the 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.75$). In the case of the 507 SNP chip with $\alpha=0.75$, only one animal decreased its GEBV accuracy. It was also observed that animals that increased in higher proportion its accuracies were the animals with lower initial accuracies (animals without phenotypic data and dams whose offspring had phenotypic data). The 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.75$) was the one that yielded higher increases. There was a third group of data that belonged to animals with higher initial accuracies (mostly fathers with many offspring that had phenotypic data), that increased their accuracies slightly when the 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.75$) was used and practically remained without changes when the 170 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.25$) and 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.5$) were used.

Regarding G and A_{22} matrices off-diagonal elements, 0.9, 0.8 and 0.7 values were observed when 170 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.25$), 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.5$) and 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.75$) were used respectively.

7.5 Discussion

Molecular contribution to genetic improvement has been widely studied for more than two decades with the objective of increasing the rate of genetic progress. Initial strategies were based in using a few molecular markers associated to the trait of interest (marker assisted selection), but this approach didn't progress due to the polygenic nature of most economically important traits and therefore phenotypic effects were too small to be statistically

significant⁽⁴⁵⁾. Further developments have expanded this concept through the identification of thousands of known SNPs. Commercially available high-density genotyping arrays and different analysis models have made possible genomic selection implementation. One of these models, ssGBLUP, has allowed improvements in GEBV accuracies in sheep production traits compared to BLUP traditional model⁽²³⁾⁽²⁴⁾⁽²⁵⁾.

Since genotyping costs in sheep are quite high relative to the animal's economic value other alternatives were sought, like the use of low-density SNP chips like the ones that were used in this study.

One way to compare models is cross-validation, where the population is divided in two subsets: training and validation, but in this work, the low number of genotyped animals didn't allow the use of this methodology and instead AIC was used. In 2014, Bernal-Vasquez et al.⁽⁴⁶⁾ compared cross-validation and AIC and found that both methodologies selected the same models, therefore AIC could be used as a reliable alternative method. AIC methodology allowed to select those models that optimized FEC, and FD traits compared to BLUP traditional model that uses only genealogical and phenotypical information. For FEC models with 170 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.25$) and 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.25$, $\alpha=0.5$ and $\alpha=0.75$) were found to be better than the traditional model. By contrast, using the 50K SNP chip model for FEC showed no difference to traditional model ($\Delta AIC < 10$). For FD only models with 50K SNP chip with $\alpha=0.75$, $\alpha=0.95$ and $\alpha=0.99$ were better than the traditional model.

When GEBV accuracies were estimated for the whole population for those models previously selected with AIC, no differences in mean accuracies were observed with the use of molecular information, probably due to the low percentage of genotyped animals compared to the total evaluated population (between 0.8 and 1.7). But an increase could be observed in dams not genotyped, but which had genotyped offspring and in genotyped animals, mostly when the 507 SNP panel with higher α was used.

For the genotyped subgroup significant differences in mean accuracies were observed in all models selected with AIC, except the 507 SNP chip model (with $\alpha=0.25$) for FEC trait and all 50K chip models for FD trait. In the case of FD, the 50K SNP chip didn't increase mean accuracies probably due to the low number of genotyped animals (0.8%) and

also because FD is a trait with higher heritability compared to FEC ($h^2=0.50$ versus $h^2=0.18$) so the margin to increase accuracies is much lower. FEC and FD reported heritability estimates for this study agree with previous ones in Corriedale breed in Uruguay⁽²⁹⁾⁽⁴⁷⁾⁽⁴⁸⁾. Heritability is a factor that influences estimated breeding value accuracy: higher trait heritability higher accuracies.

With the inclusion of the 170 SNP chip in the genetic evaluation a 2% increase in GEBV mean accuracies was observed. Regarding the 507 SNP chip, GEBV mean accuracies increased 5 and 14% when 0.5 and 0.75 G matrix weights were used. In addition, it was observed that animals with lower initial accuracies were the ones that increased their accuracies to a larger extent and that animals that benefited less were the ones that already had higher accuracies. This study shows that the use of the 507 SNP chip increased GEBV mean accuracy and those increases were enhanced with higher G matrix weights. These estimates are lower than the ones reported by other authors for GIN resistance, for example, Torres et al.⁽²⁵⁾ reported EBV accuracy increases from 0.046 to 0.073 when ssGBLUP was used compared to BLUP, but in that study a 50K SNP chip was used, therefore, with higher SNP density. The 170 and 507 SNP chips are low-density arrays so they have low genome coverage, and they can't be used for genomic selection where the premise is that a great number of SNP distributed across the genome are in linkage disequilibrium with genomic regions associated to quantitative traits⁽⁷⁾. This agrees with a study done in fish populations where prediction accuracies were calculated using different low-density chips and they found that arrays with less than 1000 SNP show a sharp decrease in accuracies as well as in estimated heritability⁽⁴⁹⁾. The only chip utilized here that could be used for GS is the 50K array, but no significant differences were observed in mean GEBV accuracies probably due to the low number of genotyped animals.

But which could be the reason for the increase in mean accuracies when the 170 and 507 SNP chips were used? EBV accuracy measures the quantity of information used in the prediction of that breeding value (own performance and family performance) and when genomic information is added the quantity of information increases due to a better capture of family relationships. SNP based pedigree includes information on unrecorded pedigrees and on Mendelian sampling⁽¹²⁾, which translates in better

accuracies in the estimations. The 507 SNP chip with ($\alpha=0.75$) better performance could be related to the higher weight given to the molecular information (G matrix) compared to the pedigree (A matrix). Also, even though the 507 SNP panel is a low-density panel it is 2.5 times denser than the 170 SNP panel, so theoretically there are more chances for SNPs to be in LD with QTLs related to FEC resistance.

According to Lourenco et al.⁽⁴⁴⁾ the correlation between elements outside the diagonal of G and A^{22} matrices is expected to be between 0.5 and 0.9 and values higher than 0.9 indicate that both matrices are very similar, thus a small gain in accuracy is expected. In this study, the 170 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.25$), the 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.5$) and the 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.75$) show expected values, but the lower value for the 507 SNP chip (with $\alpha=0.75$) indicates higher differences between G and A^{22} matrices thus a higher gain in accuracy would be expected.

7.6 Conclusions

It is possible to increase GEBV accuracies for GIN genetic resistance with the use of the 170 SNP identified by Periasamy et al.⁽²⁶⁾ and mainly with the 507 SNP chip with a 0.75 G matrix allocated weight. In the current study increases were observed only on genotyped animals not in the whole population. To evaluate changes in this population it would be necessary a much greater number of genotyped animals.

Genomic selection in the sheep industry is only possible nowadays just in a few developed countries. However, it is expected that more countries incorporate it in their National Genetic Evaluations, mostly in difficult to measure or low heritability traits. This is going to be possible as genotyping prices get cheaper and more animals could be genotyped. This will allow building an adequate training population with enough quantity of genotyped animals with medium-density chips (50K SNP) to be able to apply genomic selection to the National Genetic Evaluations. Main GS strength is that it allows increasing GEBV accuracy in young animals that still do not have their own phenotypic data. Therefore, this study is a first approximation to the incorporation of genomic information in Corriedale's genetic evaluation in Uruguay that shows that it is possible to increase breeding values

mean accuracies even with the use of low-density chips. More research is needed, with more genotyped animals and higher density chips, to implement genomic selection in this population.

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Author contribution statement

BC, EAN, BV and GC conceived and designed the study. BC performed the analysis and wrote the manuscript. BV contributed to data analysis. EAN, BV and GC revised and edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version.

7.7 References

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7.8 Supplementary material

Table 5. Mean accuracies estimated with BLUP (EBV Acc) and ssGBLUP (GEBV Acc) and percentage increase for all animals (N=37018) and for genotyped animals with 170 SNP chip ($\alpha=0.25$), with 507 SNP chip (507₁ $\alpha=0.25$; 507₂ $\alpha=0.50$; 507₃ $\alpha=0.75$) or 50K SNP chip (50K₁ $\alpha=0.75$; 50K₂ $\alpha=0.95$; 50K₃ $\alpha=0.99$) from AIC>10 models, for Log_e (FEC+100) and fiber diameter (FD). Significant values (*=P<0.05).

| Trait | All | | | | Genotyped | | | |
|-------|---------|----------|--------------|------------------|-----------|---------|----------|--------------|
| | EBV Acc | GEBV Acc | Increase (%) | Chip | n | EBV Acc | GEBV Acc | Increase (%) |
| FEC | 0.46 | 0.46 | 0 | 170 | 407 | 0.59 | 0.61 | 3* |
| | 0.46 | 0.46 | 0 | 507 ₁ | 639 | 0.58 | 0.58 | 0 |
| | 0.46 | 0.46 | 0 | 507 ₂ | 639 | 0.58 | 0.62 | 7* |
| | 0.46 | 0.46 | 0 | 507 ₃ | 639 | 0.58 | 0.67 | 16* |
| FD | 0.61 | 0.61 | 0 | 50K ₁ | 313 | 0.79 | 0.79 | 0 |
| | 0.61 | 0.61 | 0 | 50K ₂ | 313 | 0.79 | 0.79 | 0 |
| | 0.61 | 0.61 | 0 | 50K ₃ | 313 | 0.79 | 0.79 | 0 |

Figure 1. EBV (Acc) and GEBV (Acc_170_0.25 with $\alpha=0.25$) correlation for all animals evaluated for FEC trait (r=0.99).

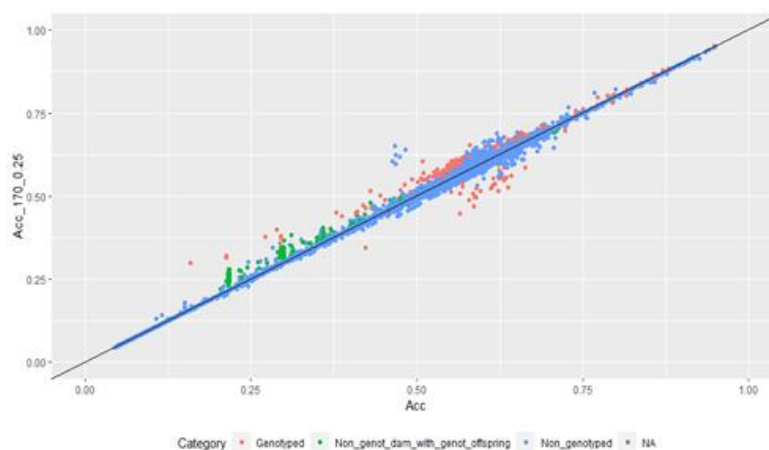


Figure 2. EBV (Acc) and GEBV (Acc_507_0.25 with $\alpha=0.25$; Acc_507_0.5 with $\alpha=0.5$ and Acc_507_0.75 with $\alpha=0.75$) correlation for all animals evaluated for FEC trait with its correlation coefficients ($r=0.99$, $r=0.99$, and $r=0.99$ respectively).

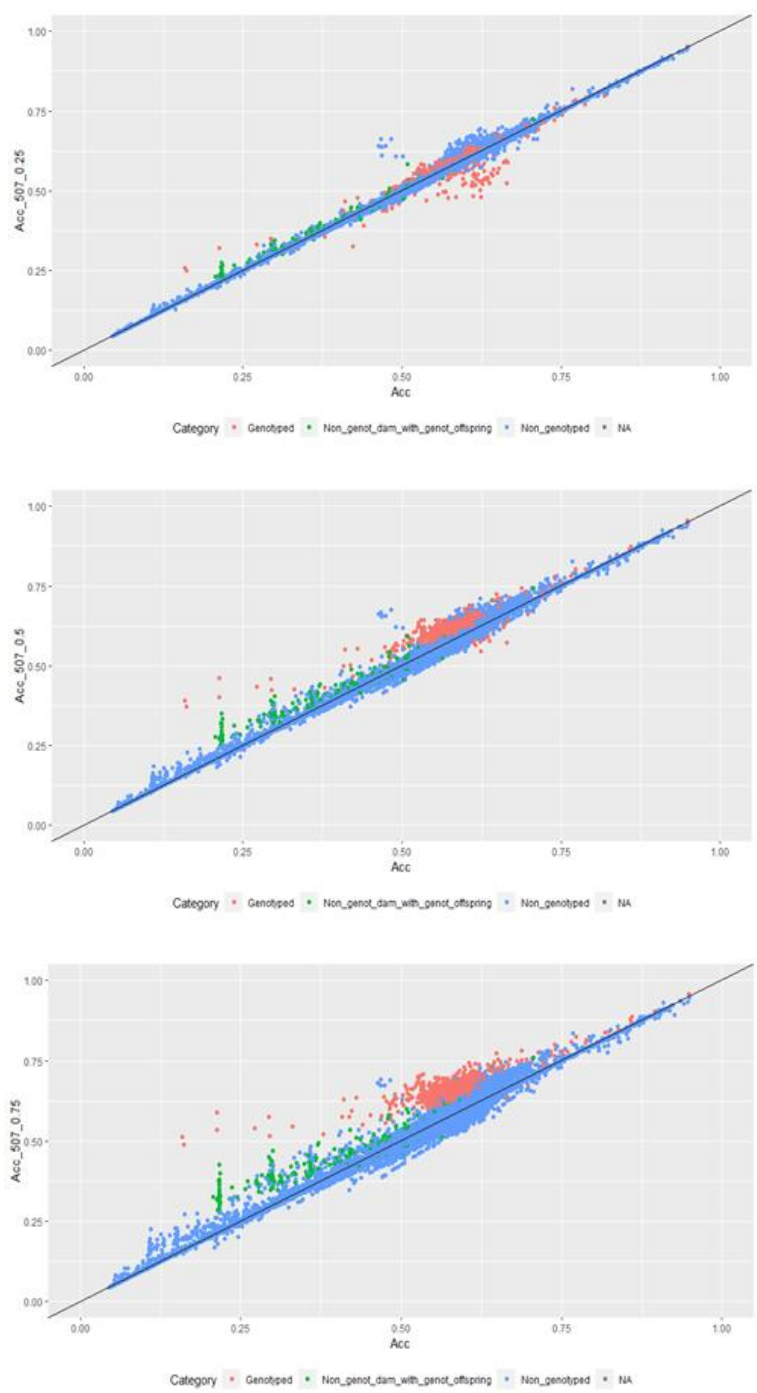


Figure 3. EBV (Acc) and GEBV (Acc_50K_0.75 with $\alpha=0.75$, Acc_50K_0.95 with $\alpha=0.95$ y Acc_50K_0.99 with $\alpha=0.99$) correlation for all animals evaluated for FD trait with its correlation coefficients ($r=0.99$, $r=0.99$, and $r=0.99$ respectively).

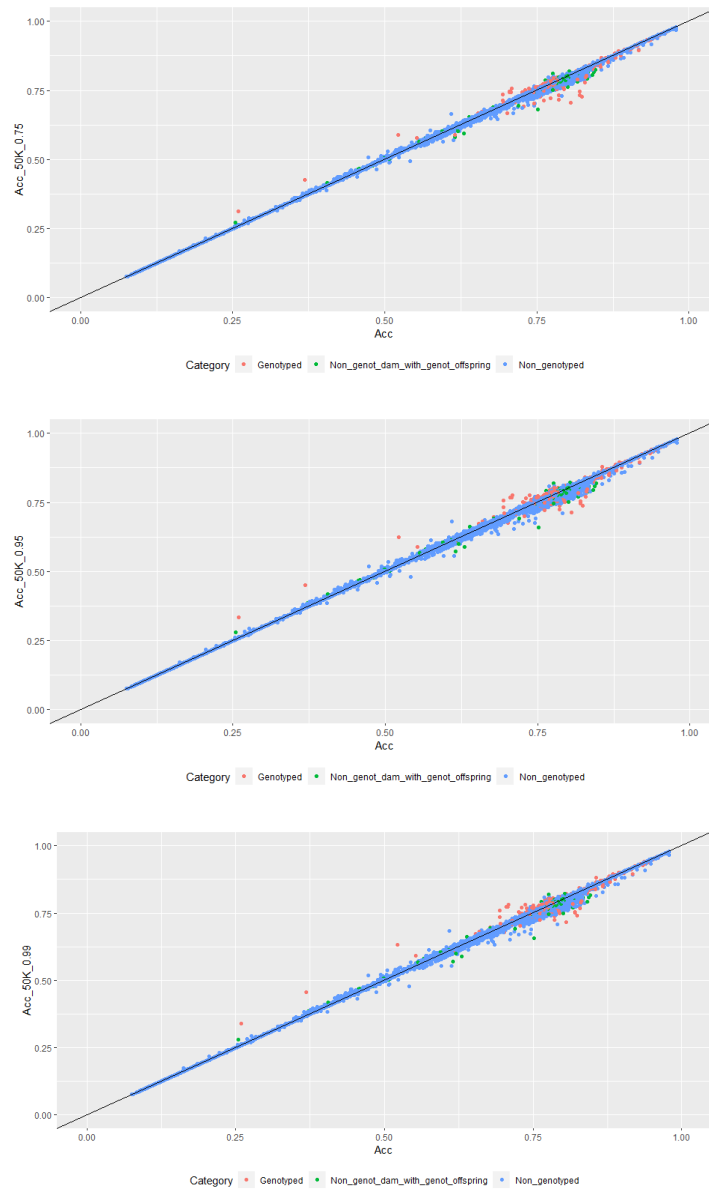


Figure 4. Correlation of EBV (Acc_FEC) and GEBV accuracies (Acc_FEC_170_0.25 with $\alpha=0.25$) for genotyped animals with the 170 SNP chip, evaluated for FEC trait ($r=0.93$).

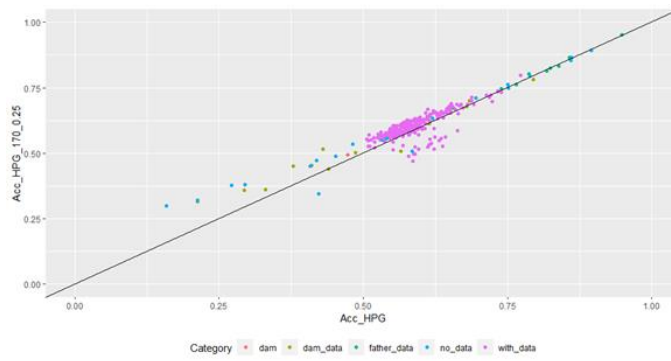
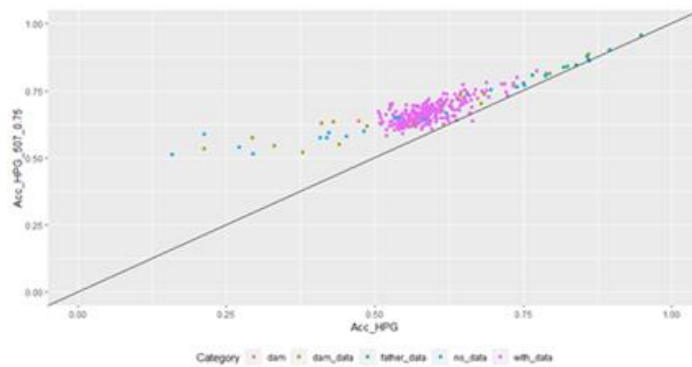
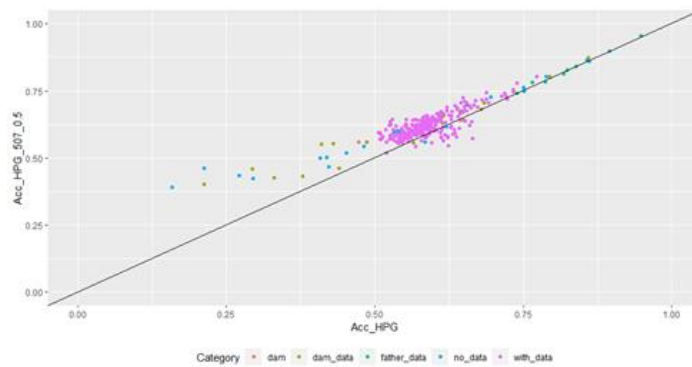


Figure 5. Correlation of EBV (Acc_FEC) and GEBV accuracies (Acc_FEC_507_0.5 with $\alpha=0.5$ and Acc_FEC_507_0.75 with $\alpha=0.75$) for genotyped animals with the 507 SNP chip, evaluated for FEC trait with its correlation coefficients ($r=0.91$ and $r=0.88$ respectively).



8. Genome wide association study of parasite resistance to gastrointestinal nematodes in Corriedale sheep

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8.1. Abstract: Selection of genetically resistant animals is one alternative to reduce the negative impact of gastrointestinal nematodes (GIN) on sheep production. The aim of this study was to identify genomic regions associated with GIN resistance in Corriedale sheep by single step genome wide association studies (ssGWAS) using 170, 507 and 50K single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs). Analysis included 19,547 lambs with faecal egg counts (FEC) records, a pedigree file of 40,056 animals and 454, 711 and 383 genotypes from 170, 507 and 50K SNPs, respectively. Genomic estimated breeding values (GEBV) were obtained with single step genomic BLUP methodology (ssGBLUP), using a univariate animal model which included contemporary group, type of birth and age of dam as class fixed effects and age at FEC recording as covariate. The SNP effects as wells as p-values were estimated with POSTGSF90 program. Significance level was defined by a chromosome-wise False Discovery Rate of 5%. Significant genomic regions were identified in chromosomes 1, 3, 12 and 19 with the 170 SNPs set; in chromosomes 7, 12 and 24 using the 507 SNP chip and only in chromosome 7 with the 50K SNP chip. Candidate genes located in these regions, using Oar_v4.0 as reference genome, were: TIMP3, TLR5, LEPR and TLR9 (170 SNPs), SYNDIG1L and MGRN1 (507 SNP chip) and INO80, TLN2, TSHR and EIF2AK4 (50K SNP chip). These results validate genomic regions associated with FEC previously identified in Corriedale and other breeds and report new candidate regions for further investigation.

Keywords: FEC; genomic regions; ssGWAS

8.2. Introduction

Parasitic infections caused by gastrointestinal nematodes (GIN) are the diseases with the greatest impact upon health and productivity for grazing ruminants, mainly sheep and goats, because they can cause weight loss, poorer growth performance and even death [1]. In Uruguay, most prevalent parasites in sheep are *Haemonchus contortus* and *Trichostrongylus colubriformis* [2,3]. One strategy to reduce the negative impact of GIN is by selection of genetically resistant animals, because GIN resistance is a moderately heritable trait [4–6]. In Uruguay, since 1994, genetic resistance for GIN is included in the Corriedale National Genetic Evaluation using faecal egg counts (FEC) measured in lambs as selection criterion. This evaluation is conducted by the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA) and the Uruguayan Wool Secretariat (SUL).

Identification of quantitative trait loci (QTL) associated with GIN resistance or susceptibility could improve selection process and the understanding of biological processes related to host immune response [7]. Genome wide association studies (GWAS) are used to identify genomic regions where candidate genes associated with a phenotypic trait are located. This methodology assumes that these genes are in linkage disequilibrium (LD) with a single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP), which means that these regions are physically connected and will segregate together in the population [8].

With single-step GBLUP (ssGBLUP) breeding values and marker effects can be estimated simultaneously, adjusting for population structure at the same time [11,12]. In addition, with this methodology non-genotyped animals in the pedigree and their phenotypes are also considered,

without computing pseudodata [13]. In this article, Wang et al. [13] showed that SNP effects can be derived from the genomic estimated breeding values (GEBV) and later used for the single-step GWAS (ssGWAS), methodology that has been validated in several species, such as bovine [14–18] and swine [19,20].

In sheep, GWAS have been extensively used to detect SNPs associated with economically important traits. The first GWAS in sheep was done to understand horns genetic basis in wild Soay sheep [21] and since then, multiple GWAS have reported QTL associated with growth, carcass and meat quality and reproductive traits [22]. Regarding GIN parasite resistance, Benavides et al. [23] reported 123 markers significantly associated with FEC and related traits for *Haemonchus contortus*, *Teladorsagia circumcincta* and *Trichostrongylus colubriformis* parasites. In another study, Berton et al. [24] found genomic regions associated with FEC using ssGWAS in Santa Inês sheep.

In 2014, Periasamy et al. [25] identified 170 SNPs associated with 76 candidate genes involved in immune response to GIN resistance. In turn, INIA developed a 507 SNP chip with Affymetrix (Charrua custom array), that contains 174 SNP related to FEC trait and 258 paternity SNPs [26,27].

The aim of this study was to identify genomic regions associated with GIN parasite resistance in Corriedale sheep using 170, 507 and 50K SNPs, using the ssGWAS approach, and explore the biological processes underlying the genetic resistance.

8.3. Materials and Methods

8.3.1. Phenotypic and pedigree data

From 2000 to 2019, FEC records were collected from 19,547 Corriedale animals belonging to 29 farms (24 stud flocks, three Experimental Units and two Progeny Testing Centrals). FEC sampling was performed according to the protocol used for Genetic Evaluations [28]. Samples were processed at parasitology laboratories at INIA or SUL, where FEC were assessed using a modified McMaster technique with a sensitivity of 100 eggs per gram of feces [29]. Due to FEC's non normal distribution, data was transformed to natural logarithm as described by Ciappesoni et al. [30]: $\text{LogFEC} = \text{Log}_e(\text{FEC}+100)$. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Genealogical information from 40,056 animals was provided by the Rural Association of Uruguay and the Uruguayan Corriedale Breeders Society, who also provided the performance data.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for animal age at recording (days), faecal egg counts (FEC) and LogFEC for the total database used (N=19,547).

| Trait | Mean | SD ^a | Min ^b | Max ^c |
|-------------------------|----------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Age at recording (days) | 278.04 | 68.71 | 101 | 460 |
| FEC | 1,309.98 | 2,157.78 | 0 | 37,400 |
| LogFEC | 6.49 | 1.24 | 4.61 | 10.53 |

^aSD: standard deviation

^bMin: minimum

^cMax: maximum

8.3.2. Genotypic data

Blood samples were collected by jugular's vein puncture using tubes with K₂ EDTA anticoagulant (BD Vacutainer) and afterwards DNA was extracted based on the protocol defined by Medrano et al. [31]. NanoDrop 8000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Scientific) was used for DNA quantification and purity evaluation (260/280 ratio). DNA integrity was checked with a 1% agarose gel with a 0.5X TBE buffer (Tris-Borate-EDTA) during 25 minutes at 100V. Finally, DNA samples were stored at -80°C until genotyped was performed.

Genomic information was available on the Corriedale breed from three different sources: 170 SNPs (International Atomic Energy) [25], 507 SNP chip (Charrua custom array, Affymetrix) [26,27] and a 50K SNP chip (Illumina Ovine SNP50 BeadChip v1 and v2 and Affymetrix Oviseer

Axiom 50K). For the 50K SNP chip, only the 33,236 SNPs in common between the Illumina and Affymetrix platforms were used.

Genomic data quality control included the exclusion of markers located in sexual chromosomes, and monomorphic SNPs and those with minor allele frequencies (MAF) <0.05 and call rate <90%; and animals with call rate <90%. Numbers of SNPs and animals after quality control, used in this study, are presented in Table 2. Only the 507 SNP chip has 91 SNPs in common with the 50K SNP chip, with no SNP overlapping among the other ones.

Table 2. Number of SNPs and animals after quality control for 170, 507 and 50K SNPs.

| Density | SNP | Animals |
|---------|--------|---------|
| 170 | 148 | 454 |
| 507 | 373 | 702 |
| 50K | 29,832 | 375 |

8.3.3. Statistical analysis

Association analysis for FEC was performed for each SNP density (170, 507 and 50K) using ssGWAS methodology [13] with BLUPF90 family of programs [32].

The GEBVs for FEC were estimated based on described phenotypic, pedigree and genomic information, based on the following univariate animal model:

$$y = Xb + Zu + e \quad (1)$$

where y is the vector of LogFEC; b is the vector of fixed effects, which includes 467 contemporary groups (birth year, gender, farm, and management flock), type of birth (2 levels: unique or multiple), age of dam (3 levels: 2,3 and ≥ 4 years old) and age at FEC recording as covariate, u is the vector of additive genetic effects, with $u \sim N(0, H\sigma^2_u)$, where H is the matrix of pedigree and genomic information, and σ^2_u is the additive genetic variance; e is the vector of random residuals $e \sim N(0, I\sigma^2_e)$ being I the identity matrix and σ^2_e the residual variance; and X and Z are the incidence matrices of fixed and additive genetic effects, respectively.

The inverse of this matrix was calculated as described by Aguilar et al. [33]:

$$H^{-1} = A^{-1} + \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & G^{-1} - A_{22}^{-1} \end{pmatrix} \quad (2)$$

where A^{-1} is the inverse of the pedigree relationship matrix for all animals, G^{-1} is the inverse of the genomic relationship matrix, and A_{22}^{-1} is the inverse of the pedigree relationship matrix for genotyped animals. G matrix was computed according to VanRaden [34]:

$$G = ZDZ'q \quad (3)$$

where Z is the matrix that relates genotypes of each locus adjusted for allelic frequencies, D is the diagonal matrix of weights for SNP variances (initially $D=I$) and q is a normalization factor.

Briefly, SNP effects were derived with the following iterative process described by Wang et al. [13]:

1. Establish the diagonal matrix of weights for SNP variances as an identity matrix: $D=I$
2. Calculate G matrix = $ZDZ'q$
3. Calculate GEBVs for all animals included in the pedigree using ssGBLUP
4. Convert GEBVs to SNP effects: $\hat{u} = qDZ'G^{-1}\hat{a}_g$, where \hat{a}_g is genotyped animals GEBV
5. Calculate each SNP weight (i): $d_i = \hat{u}_i^2 2p_i(1 - p_i)$
6. Normalize the SNP weights for the total additive genetic variance to remain constant
7. Exit or return to step 3

In the current study, the process included only one iteration because no changes were observed in marker effects when different weights were used (data not presented).

Each SNP p-value was calculated according to Aguilar et al. [16]:

$$P_i = P_t \left(\frac{\hat{u}_i}{\sqrt{\hat{\sigma}_i^2/n}}, n - 1 \right) \quad (4)$$

where P_t is the distribution function of the t distribution, \hat{u}_i is the i th SNP effect, n is the number of animals with the i th SNP and $\hat{\sigma}_i^2$ is the i th SNP genetic variance. SNP effects and p-values were estimated with POSTGSF90 [35].

After obtaining the significance levels, Manhattan plots were generated with R software [36]), where *Ovis aries* autosomic chromosomes are represented with its $-\log_{10}$ (p-values). A quantile-quantile (QQ) plot was used to evaluate if population structure was accurately accounted for in the model [37]), since if this is not fulfilled it could result in false positive associations in the ssGWAS [38]. This type of plot compares the observed and expected by chance $-\log_{10}$ significance values of each SNP [39].

Most frequently used procedures to adjust for multiple testing are Bonferroni correction and False Discovery Rate (FDR) [40]. The FDR methodology is less conservative than Bonferroni correction [41] and allows deeper exploratory analysis. In addition, Misztal et al. [42] indicated that a Bonferroni correction is not recommended for GWAS in livestock since the extent of LD is much larger than in humans [43]. Preliminary studies showed that when Bonferroni correction was applied to our data, only one SNP was detected with the 170 SNPs (results not shown). In the current study, significant SNPs were defined by using a chromosome-wise FDR of 5% using the p.adjust function in R. SNPs with a chromosome-wise FDR < 0.05 were selected to identify candidate genes for logFEC.

8.3.4. Functional gene annotation

Two databases were used for gene identification based on the Oar_v4.0 ovine reference genome: iSheep database [44] and Genome Data Viewer [45]. Candidate genes were considered as such if their boundaries fell within 20 kbp upstream or downstream of the significant SNPs [46]. UniProt database [47] was used to identify proteins and biological processes involved.

8.4. Results

8.4.1. GWAS

8.4.1.1. Genome wide associations using 170 SNPs

Figure 1 shows the Manhattan plot for logFEC using 170 SNPs and its corresponding QQ plot (Figure 2). In this case, 16 SNPs with p-values < 0.05 were identified, seven of them significant with the 5% FDR per chromosome, which were located in chromosomes 1, 3, 12 and 19 (Table 3). The QQ plot shows that most p-values follow a uniform distribution (straight line), but these seven SNPs observed p-values deviate from the expected ones suggesting an association between them and logFEC (Figure 2).

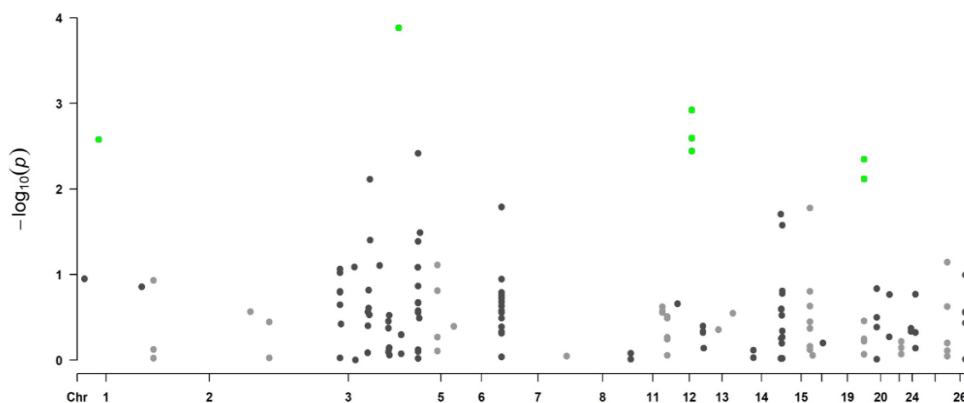


Figure 1. Manhattan plot for logFEC representing genome wide associations using 170 SNPs. Y-axis shows each SNP $-\log_{10}$ (p-value) and x-axis shows the SNP position across the 26 chromosomes. Green dots represent the significant SNPs using a chromosome-wise FDR of 5%.

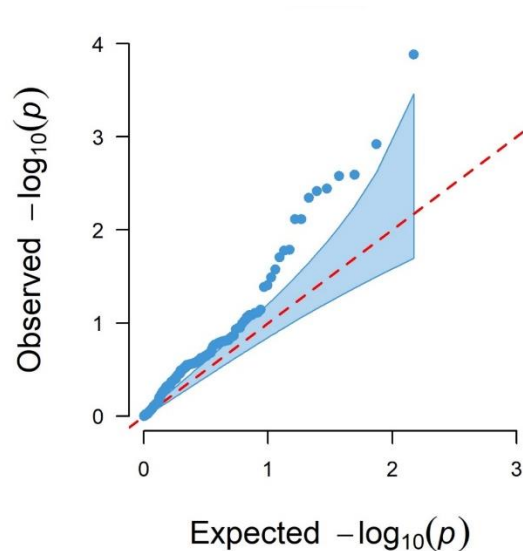


Figure 2. QQ plot of observed $-\log_{10}(p)$ (blue dots) and expected $-\log_{10}(p)$ (red dashed line) from GWAS results using the 170 SNPs.

Table 3. Significant SNPs identified with GWAS for logFEC using 170 SNPs with a chromosome-wise FDR of 5%.

| SNP name | rs code ^c | Variant type | p-value | FDR | Chr | Position (bp) ^a | Candidate gene ^b |
|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------|--------|-----|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| TIMP3_716 | rs159882061 | downstream gene variant | 0.0001 | 0.0056 | 3 | 176,291,630 | TIMP3 |
| TLR5_2276 | rs429546187 | missense variant | 0.0012 | 0.0096 | 12 | 24,624,977 | TLR5 |
| TLR5_786 | rs423611614 | synonymous variant | 0.0026 | 0.0096 | 12 | 24,626,347 | TLR5 |
| LEPR_260 | rs416296450 | intron variant | 0.0026 | 0.0079 | 1 | 40,732,375 | LEPR |
| TLR5_2037 | rs410008645 | synonymous variant | 0.0036 | 0.0096 | 12 | 24,625,096 | TLR5 |
| TLR9_2099 | rs119102850 | synonymous variant | 0.0045 | 0.0229 | 19 | 48,656,461 | TLR9 |
| TLR9_2504 | rs119102857 | synonymous variant | 0.0076 | 0.0229 | 19 | 48,656,866 | TLR9 |

^a Oarv_4.0

^b Within 20 Kbp of marker

^c[48]

In OAR3, one significant SNP is within the TIMP3 gene (Metalloproteinase Inhibitor 3) and another SNP is in OAR1 in the LEPR gene (Leptin Receptor). Other three SNPs in OAR12 are located within the TLR5 gene (Toll-like Receptor 5) and two other SNPs in OAR19 are within the TLR9 gene region (Toll-like Receptor 9).

8.4.1.2. Genome wide associations using the 507 SNP chip

Figures 3 and 4 show the Manhattan plot for logFEC using the 507 SNP chip and its corresponding QQ plot, respectively. In this case, 22 SNPs were identified with p-values <0.05, and from these, four SNPs were significant with the 5% FDR per chromosome. These SNPs are located in chromosomes 7, 12 and 24 (Table 4) and were originally obtained from the 50K SNP chip when the 507 SNP chip was developed. The QQ plot shows that most p-values follow a uniform distribution (straight line). An association between these four SNPs and logFEC is suggested by the deviation of observed p-values from the expected ones (Figure 4).

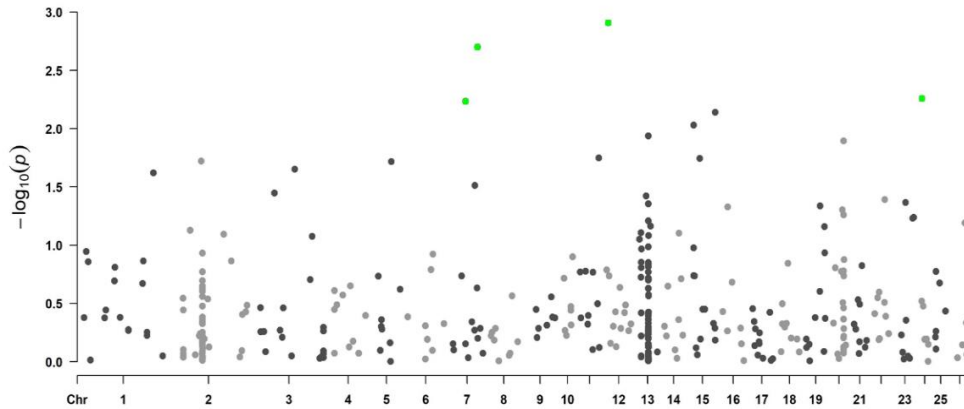


Figure 3. Manhattan plot representing genome wide associations with logFEC using the 507 SNP chip. Y-axis shows each SNP $-\log_{10}(p)$ and x-axis shows the SNP position across the 26 chromosomes. Green dots represent the significant SNPs using a chromosome-wise FDR of 5%.

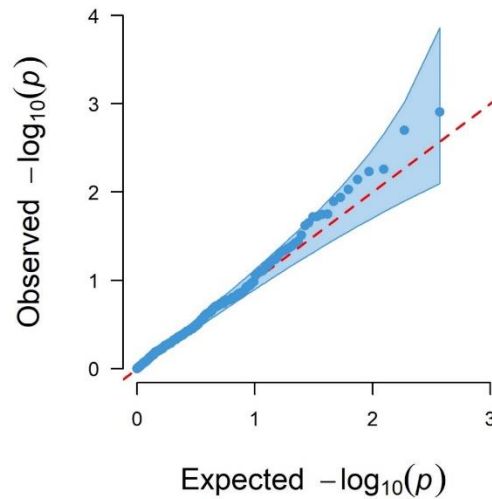


Figure 4. QQ plot of observed $-\log_{10}(p)$ values (blue dots) and expected $-\log_{10}(p)$ values (red dashed line) from GWAS results using the 507 SNP chip.

Table 4. Significant SNPs identified with GWAS for logFEC using the 507 SNP chip with a chromosome-wise FDR of 5%.

| SNP name | rs code | Variant type | p-value | FDR | Chr | Position (bp) ^a | Candidate gene ^b |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|---------|--------|-----|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| OAR12_7879376.1 | rs414871182 | intergenic variant | 0.00124 | 0.0161 | 12 | 6,202,760 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|---------|--------|----|------------|-----------------------|
| s45225.1 | rs402818177 | intergenic variant | 0.00200 | 0.0280 | 7 | 82,587,686 | +11375 bp of SYNDIG1L |
| s68231.1 | rs410292582 | intron variant | 0.00551 | 0.0386 | 24 | 3,791,887 | MGRN1 |
| OAR7_50322674.1 | rs427377192 | intergenic variant | 0.00584 | 0.0409 | 7 | 45,569,488 | |

^a Oarv_4.0

^b Within 20 Kbp of marker

In OAR24, one significant SNP is within the MGRN1 gene (Mahogunin Ring Finger 1) and another SNP in OAR7 is close to the SYNDIG1L gene (Synapse Differentiation Inducing 1-like).

8.4.1.3. Genome wide associations using the 50K SNP chip

Figure 5 shows the Manhattan plot for logFEC using the 50K SNP chip and its corresponding QQ plot (Figure 6). In this case, 2,203 SNPs were identified with p-values <0.05, and from these, five SNPs were significant with a 5% FDR per chromosome, all of them located in chromosome 7 (Table 5). The QQ plot shows that most p-values follow a uniform distribution (straight line), but these five SNPs observed p-values deviate from the expected ones which suggests an association between these SNPs and logFEC (Figure 6).

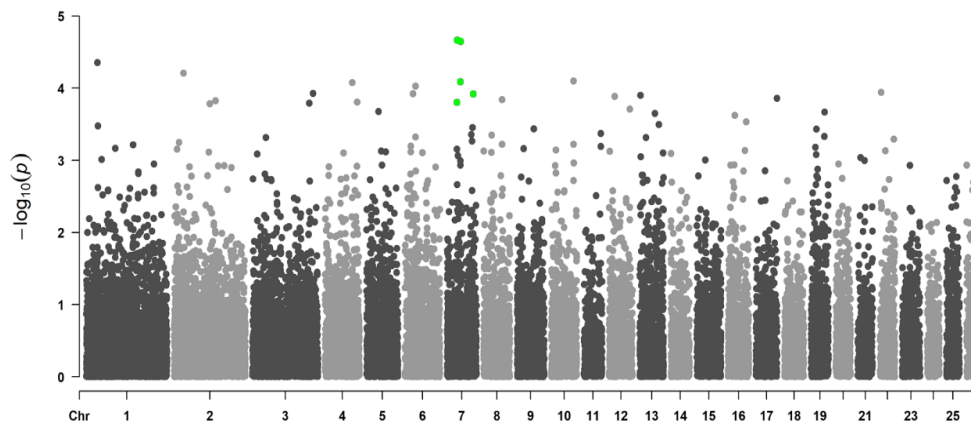


Figure 5. Manhattan plot representing genome wide associations with logFEC using the 50K SNP chip. Y-axis shows each SNP $-\log_{10}(p)$ and x-axis shows the SNP position across the 26 chromosomes. Green dots represent the significant SNPs using a chromosome-wise FDR of 5%.

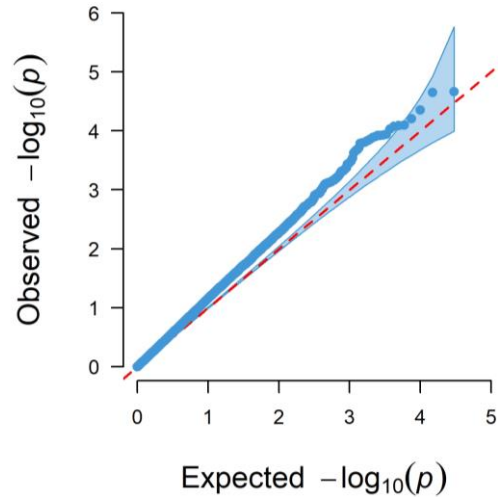


Figure 6. QQ plot of observed $-\log_{10}(p)$ (blue dots) and expected $-\log_{10}(p)$ (red dashed line) from GWAS results using the 50K SNP chip.

Table 5. Significant SNPs identified with GWAS for logFEC using the 50K SNP chip with a chromosome-wise FDR of 5%.

| SNP name | rs code | Variant type | p-value | FDR | Chr | Position (bp) ^a | Candidate gene ^b |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|---------|--------|-----|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| OAR7_37789204.1 | rs426205150 | intron variant | 0.00002 | 0.0145 | 7 | 33,565,208 | INO80 |
| OAR7_50006482.1 | rs403279855 | intergenic variant | 0.00002 | 0.0145 | 7 | 45,244,213 | |
| OAR7_49479344.1 | rs421671708 | intron variant | 0.00008 | 0.0351 | 7 | 44,708,294 | TLN2 |
| OAR7_97127242.1 | rs412670683 | intron variant | 0.00012 | 0.0388 | 7 | 89,202,663 | TSHR |
| OAR7_36815076.1 | rs407390907 | intron variant | 0.00016 | 0.0405 | 7 | 32,616,683 | EIF2AK4 |

^a Oarv_4.0

^b Within 20 Kbp of marker

In OAR7, four significant SNPs are within the INO80 gene (INO80 Complex ATPase Subunit), TLN2 gene (talin 2), TSHR gene (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone Receptor) and EIF2AK4 gene (Eukaryotic Translation Initiation Factor 2 Alpha Kinase 4).

8.4.2. Gene annotation

After identifying the candidate genes, proteins and gene ontology (GO) terms were assigned (Supplementary Table S1). In addition, associated biological processes were identified (Figure 7) and within them, genes related to immune system processes (Figure 8). Since the sheep genome is not completely annotated, genes SYNDIG1L, MGRN1, INO80 and TLN2 were not mapped in the UniProt database.

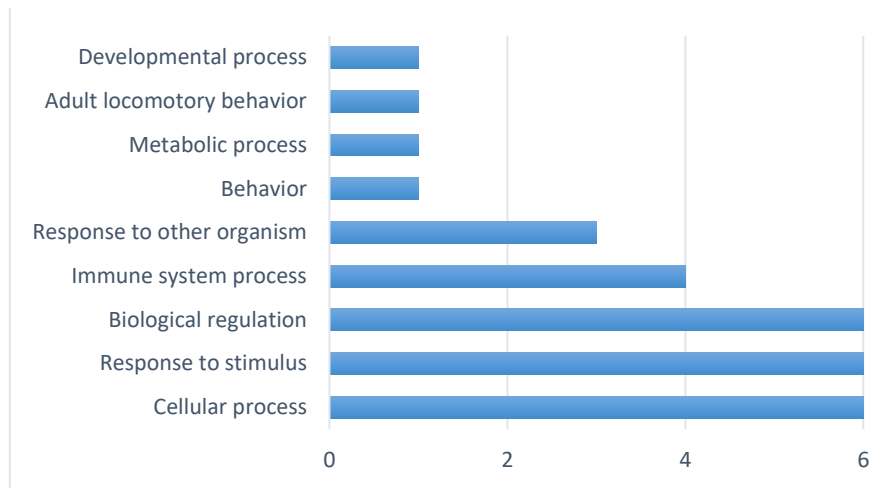


Figure 7. Total number of biological processes of candidate genes identified with GWAS for logFEC using 170 SNPs and the 507 and 50K SNP chips.

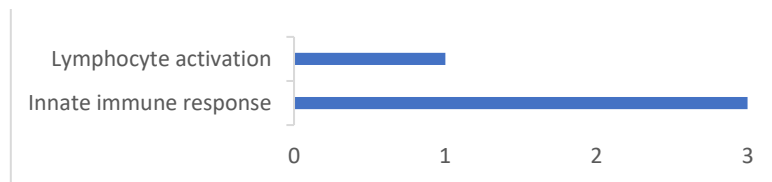


Figure 8. Total number of immune system processes of candidate genes identified with GWAS for logFEC using 170 SNPs and the 507 and 50K SNP chips.

8.5. Discussion

GIN infections have a significant impact on health and productivity in sheep production systems [7]. With the increasing development of anthelmintic resistance, more sustainable strategies have been sought for the control of GIN. One of such alternatives is the selection of genetically resistant animals that takes advantage of the host natural immunity. Factors that affect immune response development rate depends on the nematode species, host breed and intensity of infection [7]. Traditional QTL mapping and GWAS studies suggest that the three mechanisms involved in host resistance to GIN are: innate and acquired immune responses to trigger T helper type 2 cytokines production (Th2); homeostatic metabolic pathways necessary for blood coagulation at the host-parasite attachment site that block parasite feeding, and gastric mucosal protection through mucins biosynthesis that act as a barrier and trigger parasite expulsion [23]. These studies reviewed by Benavides et al. [21] suggest that GIN resistance is a quantitative trait, influenced by many genes with small effect.

In the current study, QTL associated with logFEC were explored using low density (170 and 507 SNPs) and medium density coverage (50K SNPs).

The ssGWAS appeared to have more or less effectively accounted for population structure in all three scenarios as no more associations than expected by chance were observed at low levels of significance in the QQ plots (Figures 2, 4 and 6).

The 170 SNPs were selected in a study conducted by Periasamy et al. [25] because they belonged to 76 candidate genes related to GIN infection immune response. In the current study seven SNPs (TIMP_716, TLR5_2276, TLR5_786, LEPR_260, TLR5_2037, TLR9_2099 and TLR9_2504) in chromosomes 1, 3, 12 and 19 were identified as significantly associated with logFEC under natural GIN infestation. The TIMP_716 SNP is located within the metalloproteinase 3 inhibitor gene (TIMP3), which codes for a group of inhibitor proteins that control extracellular matrix metalloproteases enzymatic activity (MMPs). These MMPs regulate degradation of all the

extracellular matrix components and participate in the processing of bioactive molecules like cytokines, chemokines, growth factors and its receptors [49] so they are involved in different physiological processes such as innate and acquired immunity and inflammation [50]. Previous studies suggest that both MMP-2 and MMP-9 are mediators of tissue damage, the first ones maintain the intestine barrier function and the second ones participate in colitis [51]. In an experimental infection of sheep with or without previous exposure to *Teladorsagia circumcincta* parasite, it was found that the last ones presented elevated levels of MMP-7 and TIMP-1 transcripts, which could be associated with a greater tissular damage in the abomasal mucosa of animals that still haven't develop immunity [52]. Furthermore, differences in the expression of MMP family genes were found in the abomasal mucosa and the abomasal lymph node from resistant and susceptible sheep [53]. In agreement with Raschia et al. [48], a significant association was found between logFEC and TIMP3_716 SNP, although in different breeds (Corriedale vs Pampinta) and type of infection (natural vs artificial). Pampinta is a synthetic breed composed of $\frac{3}{4}$ East Friesian and $\frac{1}{4}$ Corriedale. Raschia et al. [48] suggested that this could be due to the role that metalloprotease 3 inhibitor exerts in MMPs regulation involved in tissular damage triggered by a parasitic infection.

In addition, other six significant SNPs were identified with the 170 SNPs (TLR5_2276, TLR5_786, LEPR_260, TLR5_2037, TLR9_2099 and TLR9_2504). These SNP are located within three candidate genes (TLR5, LEPR y TLR9). TLR5 and TLR9 are genes that code for toll-like receptors (TLR), a family of transmembrane proteins present in epithelial cells that recognize molecular patterns associated with pathogens in the gastrointestinal mucosa and activate the innate immune system [54,55]. The host defense in the presence of an *Haemonchus contortus* infection has been associated with the activation of genes that code for this type of receptors [56]. In a study of resistant and susceptible Merino sheep artificially infected with *Haemonchus contortus* and *Trichostrongylus colubriformis*, higher expressions of TLR2, TLR4, TLR8, TLR9 and TLR10 genes were found in the abomasal mucosa of resistant animals, which could be an indication of an early inflammatory response to infection [57]. Also, in similar studies with *H. contortus* artificial infections a higher expression of the TLR2 gene was observed in abomasal tissue of Morada Nova resistant lambs [56]. The significant association between logFEC and the TLR family was also described by Raschia et al. [48]. In that study, one SNP was found located within the TLR10 gene (TLR10_292 SNP) while in the current study five SNPs were found but in the TLR5 and TLR9 genes instead, also in Corriedale sheep but under natural infection. This validates the relationship found in previous studies between these receptors and the immune response triggered in the host in the face of a parasitic infection.

The last significant SNP found with the 170 SNP was the LEPR_260 that is located within the LEPR gene, which codes for the leptin receptor (OB receptor). Leptin is a protein that is produced in the adipose tissue, in response to feed intake and energy balance regulation [58]. Since leptin receptors and cytokine IL-6 receptors have a similar structure, leptin acts as a cytokine, also called adipokine, and participates in the innate and acquired immunity regulation [58]. Leptin levels usually increase during an infection [59] and this increase could be related with the anorexia induced during a parasitic infection [60]. A previous study by Valderrábano et al. [61] suggested that differences in immune response in pregnant ewes artificially infected with *Haemonchus contortus* could be associated with serum leptin levels. The significant association found in the current study between logFEC and LEPR_260 in Corriedale breed validates previous studies done in other breeds of leptin involvement with the immune response in the presence of a parasitic infection.

Regarding the 507 SNP chip, in the current study significant associations were found between the logFEC and four SNPs in chromosomes 7,12 and 24, but only two of them were within or at short distance of genes (s45225.1 y s68231.1). This last SNP is within the Mahogunin Ring Finger 1 gene (MGRN1) and the s45225.1 SNP is at 11,375 bases distance from the Synapse Differentiation Inducing 1-like gene (SYNDIG1L). This gene codes for an integral membrane protein, that in previous studies was reported as associated with traits related to teat number in pigs [62] and to the number of thoracic vertebrae in sheep [63]. The MGRN1 gene codes for the E3 ubiquitin ligase that participates in metallic ions union. In a GWAS for resistance to GIN in Tunisian sheep, no association was found between this gene with logFEC, but instead it was related to carcass bone weight [64]. Other studies showed this gene associated with meat tenderness in Nellore cattle [65] and bull fertility in Holstein cattle [66].

Finally, with the 50K SNP chip significant associations were found between logFEC and five SNPs in chromosome 7, but only four of them (OAR7_37789204.1, OAR7_49479344.1, OAR7_97127242.1 and OAR7_36815076.1) were located within genes (INO80, TLN2, TSHR and EIF2AK4, respectively). INO80 gene codes for a subunit of the INO80 chromatin remodeling complex. This complex participates in the regulation of transcription, DNA damage repair and DNA replication, processes needed for cell integrity [67]. Zhou et al. [68] found that this gene is related to oncogenic transcription and tumor growth in melanoma. The Talin 2 gene (TLN2) codes for a cytoskeleton protein that participates in cellular adhesion, and it was found to be associated with Alzheimer's disease [69]. The Eukaryotic Translation Initiation Factor 2 Alpha Kinase 4 gene (EIF2AK4) codes for a member of a family of kinases that regulate protein synthesis, and mutations in this gene seem to cause pulmonary veno-occlusive disease [70]. The TSHR gene codes for the Thyroid Stimulating Hormone Receptor that controls the thyroid cellular metabolism. Cun et al. [71] found an association between this gene and litter size in sheep from six different breeds and in another study this gene was found associated with an autoimmune disease that affects the thyroid gland (Grave's disease) [72].

To our knowledge none of the candidate genes found with the 507 and 50K SNP arrays have been previously reported in association with GIN resistance.

The gene ontology analysis with UniProt database showed the biological processes related to six genes found in the current study, the other four were not mapped in this database (SYNDIG1L, MGRN1, INO80 y TLN2). The TIMP3, TLR5, TLR9, LEPR, TSHR and EIF2AK4 genes are related to cellular processes (GO: 0009987), response to stimulus (GO:0050896) and biological regulation (GO:0065007), and from these only three are listed as related to immune system processes (GO:0002376; TLR5, TLR9, TSHR). From these three genes, two are related to the innate immune response (GO:0045087; TLR5 y TLR9) and the TSHR gene is related to lymphocyte activation (GO:0046649) and specifically to B cell differentiation (GO:0030183).

8.6. Conclusions

In the current study, genomic regions associated with GIN resistance as well as candidate genes were identified. Some of these candidate genes are related to the immune system (TIMP3, TLR5, TLR9 and LEPR) confirming previous findings in other breeds and under artificial GIN infestation. On the other hand, some non-reported candidate genes were found in association with logFEC and which could be valuable for future studies (SYNDIG1L, MGRN1, INO80, TLN2, TSHR and EIF2AK4).

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: www.mdpi.com/xxx/s1, Table S1: proteins and GO terms.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, E.N. and G.C.; methodology, E.N., B.V. and G.C.; software, B.C. and B.V.; formal analysis, B.C. and B.V.; investigation, B.C.; resources, G.C.; data curation, B.C. and B.V.; writing—original draft preparation, B.C.; writing—review and editing, B.V., E.N. and G.C.; visualization, B.C.; supervision, E.A. and G.C.; project administration, G.C.; funding acquisition, G.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The animal study protocol was approved by the Animal Ethics Committee of INIA (Approval number INIA_2018.2) in accordance with Uruguayan laws for the care and management of experimental animals (cnea.gub.uy, law 18611).

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Restrictions apply to the availability of these data. Data were obtained from INIA and are available from the authors with INIA's permission.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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8.8. Supplementary Materials: Table S1: Proteins and GO terms

| SNP | Gene | Protein | GO terms |
|-----|-------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 170 | TIMP3 | Metalloproteinase inhibitor 3 | extracellular region [GO:0005576]; enzyme inhibitor activity [GO:0004857]; metal ion binding [GO:0046872]; metalloendopeptidase inhibitor activity [GO:0008191] |
| | TLR5 | toll-like receptor 5 precursor | integral component of membrane [GO:0016021]; transmembrane signaling receptor activity [GO:0004888]; defense response to bacterium [GO:0042742]; inflammatory response [GO:0006954]; innate immune response [GO:0045087]; MyD88-dependent toll-like receptor signaling pathway [GO:0002755]; positive regulation of cytokine production [GO:0001819]; toll-like receptor 5 signaling pathway [GO:0034146] |

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| | LEPR | Leptin receptor (OB receptor) | basolateral plasma membrane [GO:0016323]; lateral plasma membrane [GO:0016328]; receptor complex [GO:0043235]; leptin receptor activity [GO:0038021]; angiogenesis [GO:0001525]; bone growth [GO:0098868]; cholesterol metabolic process [GO:0008203]; energy homeostasis [GO:0097009]; glial cell proliferation [GO:0014009]; glucose homeostasis [GO:0042593]; glycogen metabolic process [GO:0005977]; negative regulation of autophagy [GO:0010507]; negative regulation of gluconeogenesis [GO:0045721]; negative regulation of hydrolase activity [GO:0051346]; phagocytosis [GO:0006909]; positive regulation of cold-induced thermogenesis [GO:0120162]; positive regulation of protein phosphorylation [GO:0001934]; regulation of bone remodeling [GO:0046850]; regulation of feeding behavior [GO:0060259]; regulation of transport [GO:0051049]; sexual reproduction [GO:0019953]; T cell differentiation [GO:0030217] |
| | TLR9 | Toll-like receptor 9 (CD antigen CD289) | early phagosome [GO:0032009]; endolysosome [GO:0036019]; endoplasmic reticulum [GO:0005783]; endoplasmic reticulum membrane [GO:0005789]; endosome [GO:0005768]; integral component of membrane [GO:0016021]; lysosome [GO:0005764]; pattern recognition receptor activity [GO:0038187]; protein homodimerization activity [GO:0042803]; siRNA binding [GO:0035197]; transmembrane signaling receptor activity [GO:0004888]; unmethylated CpG binding [GO:0045322]; inflammatory response [GO:0006954]; innate immune response [GO:0045087]; MyD88-dependent toll-like receptor signaling pathway [GO:0002755]; positive |

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|-----|----------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | <p>regulation of B cell activation [GO:0050871]; positive regulation of B cell proliferation [GO:0030890]; positive regulation of immunoglobulin production [GO:0002639]; positive regulation of inflammatory response [GO:0050729]; positive regulation of interferon-alpha production [GO:0032727]; positive regulation of interferon-beta production [GO:0032728]; positive regulation of interferon-gamma production [GO:0032729]; positive regulation of MAPK cascade [GO:0043410]; positive regulation of toll-like receptor 9 signaling pathway [GO:0034165]; regulation of B cell differentiation [GO:0045577]; regulation of toll-like receptor 9 signaling pathway [GO:0034163]; response to molecule of bacterial origin [GO:0002237]; toll-like receptor 9 signaling pathway [GO:0034162]</p> |
| 507 | SYNDIG1L | synapse differentiation-inducing gene protein 1-like | integral component of membrane [O:0016021] |
| | MGRN1 | E3 ubiquitin-protein ligase MGRN1 isoform X1 | metal ion binding [GO:0046872] |
| 50K | INO80 | Chromatin-remodeling ATPase INO80 (EC 3.6.4.-) | <p>cytosol [GO:0005829]; Ino80 complex [GO:0031011]; nuclear body [GO:0016604]; alpha-tubulin binding [GO:0043014]; ATP binding [GO:0005524]; ATPase activity, acting on DNA [GO:0008094]; DNA binding [GO:0003677]; hydrolase activity [GO:0016787]; nucleosome-dependent ATPase activity [GO:0070615]; ATP-dependent chromatin remodeling [GO:0043044];</p> |

| | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | <p>cellular response to ionizing radiation [GO:0071479]; double-strand break repair via homologous recombination [GO:0000724]; mitotic sister chromatid segregation [GO:0000070]; positive regulation of cell growth [GO:0030307]; positive regulation of nuclear cell cycle DNA replication [GO:0010571]; positive regulation of transcription by RNA polymerase II [GO:0045944]; regulation of G1/S transition of mitotic cell cycle [GO:2000045]; spindle assembly [GO:0051225]; transcription, DNA-templated [GO:0006351]; UV-damage excision repair [GO:0070914]</p> |
| TLN2 | talin-2 isoform X3 | | <p>cytoplasm [GO:0005737]; cytoskeleton [GO:0005856]; focal adhesion [GO:0005925]; ruffle [GO:0001726]; actin filament binding [GO:0051015]; structural constituent of cytoskeleton [GO:0005200]; cell adhesion [GO:0007155]</p> |
| TSHR | Thyrotropin receptor (Thyroid-stimulating hormone receptor) (TSH-R) | | <p>basolateral plasma membrane [GO:0016323]; integral component of membrane [GO:0016021]; plasma membrane [GO:0005886]; protein-containing complex binding [GO:0044877]; signaling receptor activity [GO:0038023]; thyroid-stimulating hormone receptor activity [GO:0004996]; adenylate cyclase-activating G protein-coupled receptor signaling pathway [GO:0007189]; adult locomotory behavior [GO:0008344]; B cell differentiation [GO:0030183]; cell surface receptor signaling pathway [GO:0007166]; cellular response to glycoprotein [GO:1904588]; cellular response to thyrotropin-releasing hormone [GO:1905229]; cochlea morphogenesis [GO:0090103]; dopaminergic neuron differentiation [GO:0071542]; inner ear</p> |

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|--|---------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | receptor cell stereocilium organization [GO:0060122]; positive regulation of cold-induced thermogenesis [GO:0120162]; positive regulation of multicellular organism growth [GO:0040018]; regulation of locomotion [GO:0040012]; thyroid-stimulating hormone signaling pathway [GO:0038194] |
| | EIF2AK4 | Non-specific serine/threonine protein kinase (EC 2.7.11.1) | ATP binding [GO:0005524]; eukaryotic translation initiation factor 2alpha kinase activity [GO:0004694]; protein serine kinase activity [GO:0106310]; protein threonine kinase activity [GO:0106311]; cellular response to amino acid starvation [GO:0034198]; cellular response to cold [GO:0070417]; DNA damage checkpoint [GO:0000077]; eiF2alpha phosphorylation in response to endoplasmic reticulum stress [GO:0036492]; GCN2-mediated signaling [GO:0140469] |

9. DISCUSIÓN GENERAL

Una meta de los programas de mejoramiento genético es acelerar la tasa de progreso genético anual en las poblaciones objetivo. La precisión de la selección es uno de los factores importantes que contribuye a la tasa de mejora genética. La incorporación de información genómica en la predicción de los valores de cría contribuye a esto en la medida que permite incrementar la precisión de la selección de los animales, a edades más tempranas.

El impacto del uso de información genómica sobre las precisiones está condicionado por varios factores como el tamaño de la población de referencia, la densidad de marcadores utilizados y la heredabilidad de la característica.

En esta tesis, se utilizó la información de SNP proveniente de tres set o paneles: 170 SNP, 507 SNP y 50K SNP. Los dos primeros son de baja densidad y los SNP que los integran fueron definidos en base a estudios previos que los identificaron en base a sus asociaciones con características de interés. En el caso del set de 170 SNP, el conjunto de marcadores fue definido a partir de 76 genes candidatos relacionados a la respuesta inmune ante una infección parasitaria, en un estudio realizado por Periasamy et al. (2014). En forma similar el panel de 507 SNP, incluye marcadores potencialmente relacionados con la característica HPG, y fue desarrollado por INIA en conjunto con la empresa Affymetrix (Proyecto FMV_2_2011_1_6356_ANII).

Por otro lado, el panel denominado como 50K fue desarrollado por la empresa Illumina en colaboración con el International Sheep Genomics Consortium (ISGC) e incluye SNP que están distribuidos de manera uniforme a lo largo de todo el genoma. De la conjunción de los genotipados disponibles, se utilizaron aquellos en común entre el chip de Illumina Ovine SNP50 BeadChip v1, Illumina Ovine SNP50 BeadChip v2, y Affymetrix Oviser Axiom 50K, totalizando 33.236 los SNPs utilizados en los análisis de esta tesis.

El primer estudio tuvo el objetivo de evaluar el aporte de información molecular en la precisión de los EBV de HPG como una primera aproximación al impacto esperado en la evaluación genética de la raza Corriedale, ya que el número de animales en la población de referencia es aún limitado.

En este estudio se analizó también DF, a modo de comparación, considerando que DF fue elegida por ser una característica de alta heredabilidad, en contraste con el HPG que es de baja heredabilidad.

Los resultados de esta primera aproximación son auspiciosos ya que se encontró que los paneles de baja densidad incrementaron la precisión promedio de los GEBV de HPG de los animales genotipados. La magnitud de estos incrementos fueron 3%, 7% y 16% para 170 SNP con $\alpha=0,25$; 507 SNP con $\alpha=0,5$ y 507 SNP con $\alpha=0,75$, respectivamente.

Para hacer comparables los resultados entre los paneles de baja densidad, y tener una mejor estimación de su impacto, se calcularon también las precisiones solo de los animales genotipados con ambos paneles. En este caso los resultados son similares en cuanto a las tendencias, con diferencias menores en las magnitudes siendo los incrementos de 2%, 5% y 14% para 170 SNP con $\alpha=0,25$; 507 SNP con $\alpha=0,5$ y 507 SNP con $\alpha=0,75$, respectivamente.

Al incrementar el número de marcadores es esperable alcanzar mayores incrementos en las precisiones (Goddard et al. 2011), como se observó en los paneles de baja densidad.

Sin embargo, no hubo cambios en las precisiones con la incorporación del 50K. Esto posiblemente esté asociado a que el bajo número de animales genotipado fue más limitante en este caso.

Dado que el porcentaje de animales genotipados fue muy bajo con respecto al total de animales evaluados (entre 0,8 y 1,7%), el incremento que se observó en este subgrupo no se vio reflejado en el promedio del total de animales evaluados. Los aumentos de las precisiones con los paneles de baja densidad fueron menores que los reportados por Pravia et al. (2021) para consumo residual de alimento (RFI) quien comparó ssGBLUP y BLUP, con precisiones de 0,334 y 0,305, respectivamente. Pero en ese caso se utilizaron genotipados imputados a un panel de 50K SNP, por lo tanto, con mucho mayor cobertura del genoma.

En nuestro estudio, se utilizó el ssGBLUP, pero considerando diferentes pesos (α) en la matriz de relaciones genómicas y se seleccionaron los modelos con mejor ajuste utilizando el criterio AIC. La utilización del AIC permitió seleccionar los modelos con información genómica con mejor ajuste al conjunto de datos, comparados con el modelo tradicional que utiliza sólo genealogía e información fenotípica.

El mejor desempeño del panel de 507 SNP con $\alpha=0,75$ podría estar relacionado con el mayor peso asignado a la información molecular (matriz G) respecto a la matriz de pedigree (matriz A). Esto podría estar asociado a una estimación más precisa del desvío mendeliano (Goddard & Hayes, 2007) y consecuentemente una mayor precisión de la estimación del mérito genético del animal.

Otro factor importante en el impacto de los paneles evaluados es la asociación existente entre los SNP considerados en cada uno de ellos y los QTL o genes que influyen en la característica HPG. En el segundo artículo se investigó la asociación de los SNP con HPG para la validación o identificación de QTL asociados a la característica.

En base al ssGWAS, se estimaron los efectos de los SNP a partir de los GEBV y se calcularon los p-valores. El nivel de significancia fue definido por la Tasa de Descubrimiento Falso a nivel de cromosoma de $\alpha=0,05$.

En el caso del set de 170 SNP, se validaron SNP previamente postulados por Periasamy et al. (2014) en base a genes candidatos en los cromosomas 1, 3, 12 y 19, en las cuales se localizaron los genes TIMP3, TLR5, LEPR y TLR9, previamente reportados en asociación con HPG. El SNP TIMP3 fue reportado como asociado al EBV de HPG, pero en la raza Pampinta (Raschia et al, 2021). Este trabajo es además el primer reporte de la vinculación de los genes TIMP3, TLR5, TLR9 y LEPR con la resistencia a NGI específicamente en la raza Corriedale. Con excepción del TIMP3, los otros genes fueron reportados en trabajos que utilizaron infestación artificial de NGI, a diferencia del presente trabajo que se basó en infestación natural.

Se identificaron regiones genómicas de interés en los cromosomas 7, 12 y 24 con el panel de 507 SNP y en el cromosoma 7 con el panel de 50K SNP. En estos casos los genes candidatos son SYNDIG1L y MGRN1 (panel de 507 SNP) e INO80, TLN2, TSHR y EIF2AK4 (panel de 50K SNP), sobre los cuales no se encontró bibliografía relativa a su asociación con esta característica.

Dada la casi nula superposición de SNP entre los tres paneles, el ssGWAS señala diferentes regiones de interés y genes candidatos cuya incorporación en un solo panel podría

contribuir a un mayor impacto de la información molecular en la mejora genética de la resistencia a los NGI por la selección por HPG.

10. CONCLUSIONES GENERALES

Los resultados del primer trabajo comprueban la hipótesis planteada y son auspiciosos respecto al potencial de aumentar las precisiones de los GEBV de resistencia genética a NGI aun utilizando paneles de baja densidad de SNP. En este trabajo solo se observaron aumentos en la población genotipada, no en el total de la población evaluada, además tampoco se observaron aumentos con el panel de mayor densidad, que es el único panel comercial. Para evaluar posibles cambios sería necesario un mayor número de animales genotipados. Esto va a ser posible a medida que los precios de los genotipados sean más accesibles y puedan genotiparse más animales. Esto permitirá incursionar en la selección genómica en la raza Corriedale, principalmente en aquellas características de difícil medición o baja heredabilidad.

En cuanto a los resultados del segundo trabajo validan regiones genómicas asociadas a resistencia a NGI previamente identificadas en otras razas, y reportan regiones nuevas a ser investigadas en futuros estudios. De los genes candidatos encontrados, TLR5 y TL9 están directamente vinculados con la respuesta inmune innata. Son necesarios estudios adicionales con mayor cantidad de animales genotipados para seguir explorando los mecanismos de inmunidad vinculados a la respuesta del ovino frente a una infección por NGI.

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12. ANEXOS

12.1. Anexo I. Póster AUPA Publicación I




7º CONGRESO
25 AÑOS
1996 - 2021



INIA
Instituto Nacional de Investigación Agropecuaria
URUGUAY

¿CUÁNTO MEJORA LA PRECISIÓN DE LA EVALUACIÓN DE RESISTENCIA A NEMATODOS GASTROINTESTINALES EN CORRIEDALE POR INCLUSIÓN DE INFORMACIÓN MOLECULAR?

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Introducción


- Los nematodos gastrointestinales (NGI) son las infecciones parasitarias más prevalentes en ovinos.
- Una alternativa de control es la selección genética utilizando como criterio de selección el recuento de huevos por gramo en heces (HPG).

Objetivo

Evaluar el aporte de información molecular a través de la comparación de las precisiones de los valores de cría (EBV) y EBV genómicos (GEBV) de HPG y diámetro de fibra (DF) en la raza Corriedale.

Materiales y Métodos

- El análisis incluyó 19.547 corderos con dato de HPG y DF
- 454, 711 y 383 animales con información molecular de paneles de 170, 507 y 50K SNP respectivamente.
- Los EBV y GEBV se estimaron con un modelo animal univariado que incluyó los efectos fijos grupo contemporáneo, tipo de nacimiento y edad de la madre y como covariable edad al registro.
- Se consideraron pesos diferenciales (α) en la matriz de relaciones genómicas, identificándose los modelos con mejor ajuste con el criterio de información de Akaike (AIC)
- Los modelos seleccionados fueron posteriormente utilizados para la estimación de los GEBV y sus precisiones.



Resultados

- El uso de α solo impactó en el ajuste con paneles de baja densidad en el caso de HPG.
- No hubo diferencias en las precisiones de los EBV y GEBV de DF.
- No se encontraron diferencias en las precisiones promedio de la población total pero sí en el subgrupo de animales genotipados (Tabla).

| Característica | Panel | Acc EBV | Acc GEBV | Diferencia | % Aumento |
|----------------|------------------|---------|----------|------------|-----------|
| HPG | 170 | 0,59 | 0,60 | 0,01 | 2% |
| | 507 ₁ | 0,59 | 0,59 | 0,00 | 0% |
| | 507 ₂ | 0,59 | 0,62 | 0,03 | 5% |
| | 507 ₃ | 0,59 | 0,67 | 0,08 | 14% |

Tabla . Precisiones promedio del EBV (Acc EBV) y GEBV (Acc GEBV), diferencia y % de aumento para los animales genotipados (n= 305) con los paneles de 170 ($\alpha=0,25$) y 507 SNP (507₁ $\alpha=0,25$; 507₂ $\alpha=0,50$; 507₃ $\alpha=0,75$) de los modelos con AIC>10, para el logaritmo natural de HPG (LnHPG). En todos los casos la diferencia fue significativa ($p<0.05$) excepto para 507₁.

Conclusiones

El mejor desempeño del panel de 507 SNP para HPG podría deberse a que incluye 258 SNP de parentesco por lo que captura mejor las relaciones de parentesco al incluir el desvío mendeliano.

12.2. Anexo II. Póster AUPA Publicación II

