

Supplementation of ruminants on winter pastures

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Enhancing poor quality roughage utilization through supplementation and subsequent improvement in extensive ruminant production in South Africa.

A series of studies was conducted to evaluate differential energy and nitrogen (N) sources as supplemental feed to sheep grazing low quality winter grazing in the High veldt. Knowledge on supplementation under local conditions are limiting, since the majority of supplementation studies are funded and performed in the more temperate areas.

Results indicated that higher N and energy inclusion levels are necessary to optimize ruminant production under local conditions compared to temperate areas. In addition, the ratio of fermentable energy to available protein is an important parameter in optimizing supplementation programs. It is concluded that the supplementary recommendations from the current feeding tables does not describe the requirements and nutrient quality of the tropical grasses satisfactorily and as such, cannot be used to predict supplementation responses by the tropical forage fed ruminant.