A COMPARISON OF THE GROWTH AND MILK CONVENTION RATES OF LAMBS AND GOAT KIDS IN MALAWI.

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ABSTRACT

Growth rate of local (LL), Doper (DD) and crossbred (DL) lambs and of local (LL), Boer (BB) and crossbred (BL) goat kids were studied over two seasons of kidding/lambing until 24 weeks of age. The kids and lambs suckled their dams indoors for one month. Thereafter, both the dams and the young grazed natural pastures, but were also provided with a concentrate. The mean birth weight, weaning weight at 17 weeks of age and preweaning daily liveweight gains for lambs were 3.19 ± 0.05 kg, 18.5 ± 0.32 kg and were 128.9 ± 2.5 g. Postweaning weights and weight gains were 24.5 ± 0.38 kg and 80.9 ± 4.5 g, respectively. Season of lambing and genotype exerted significant influences on all traits. The mean birth weight, weaning weight at 17 weeks of age and preweaning daily liveweight gains for goat kids were 2.77 ± 0.08 kg, 13.0 ± 0.41 kg and 87.0 ± 3.5 g. Postweaning weights and weight gains were 20.0 ± 0.57 kg and 55.1 ± 3.8 g, respectively. Season of kidding had a significant effect on all the traits, but genotype affected only kid birth weight. Milk conversion was 0.084 kg/kg milk (P<0.001) for lambs and 0.064 kg/kg milk (P<0.001) for kids. Generally, the performance of lambs was significantly (P<0.001) higher at all growth stages than that of kids. Although the recommendation for production favours lambs due to faster growth, it is important that this recommendation be based on biological efficiencies which should include the dam weights, milk production, mortality and reproductive performance of both species.

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