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TLE PERFORMANCE AND NUTRITIVE VALUE OF PASTURES ON

SWAZI NATION LAND

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ABSTRACT

Pasture samples and animal data were collected from three areas representing the agro-ecological zones in Swaziland. The crude protein content (CP) was similar in all regions and there was no significant (P>0.05) difference in CP content between the wet and the dry seasons. The overall mean dry matter yield for the Highveld (1.56 tons/ha) was significantly (P<0.05) higher compared with both the Middleveld (0.91 tons/ha) and the Lowveld (0.93 tons/ha), and there was no significant (P>0.05) difference between the Middleveld and the Lowveld. There were no seasonal difference (P>0.05) in magnesium content of the pasture among the regions. However, mean calcium levels were significantly (P<0.05) higher in the Lowveld (1.68 ppm) compared with the Highveld (1.09 ppm) and Middleveld (1.34 ppm), and there was no significant (P>0.05) difference between the Highveld and the Middleveld. The mean P content for the Middleveld (1.23 ppm) was significantly (P<0.05) higher than both the Highveld (0.70 ppm) and the Lowveld. NDF content was significantly (P<0.05) greater in the Highveld (76.3%) compared with the Middleveld (68.7%) and the Lowveld (66.7%), and there was no significant (P>0.05) difference between the Middleveld and the Lowveld. Digestibility values were similar in all the regions. In all the regions both steers and heifers had a significantly (P<0.05) lower mean live weight change (-2.3 kg per month) in the dry season than in the wet season (+12.4 kg per month)

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