LACTATION PATTERN AND MILK COMPOSITION OF SHEEP AND GOATS IN MALAWI

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ABSTRACT
The pattern of lactation and the composition of milk of local goats (LL), Boer goats (BB) and their crossbreds (BL) and of local sheep (LL), Doper sheep (DD) and their cross breeds (DL) were studied over two seasons of kidding/lambing for the first 12 weeks of lactation. Stage of lactation significantly (P<0.01) affected the pattern of lactation. The milk yields of goats increased from 1021 + 35 g to a maximum of 1123 + 35 g at TWO weeks and decreased thereafter to 795 + 35 at the end of the measurements period at 12 weeks (P < 0.001). The daily yields of sheep, on the other hand, decreased from 819 + 20 g at the beginning of the lactation to 559 + 20 g at the end. The differences between the species and at all stages of lactation were highly significantly (P <0.001). The overall mean levels of total solids, fat, solids-non-fat (SNF), ash, protein, lactose and energy for goats were 17.4%, 6.8%, 10.6%, 0.88%, 4.5%, 4.7% and 4.44 MJ/kg, respectively. The respective values for sheep were 18.3%, 6.0%, 12.3%, 0.94%, 5.2%, 4.9% and 4.39MJ/kg. There were significant species differences (P<0.001) in all the variables except energy content. It is concluded that goats may be the more suitable species to be used for milk production due to their better lactational performance.

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