

M89 **Tiller density stability of Piatã palisadegrass swards deferred with different initial heights.** B. M. L. Sousa¹, D. Nascimento Júnior*¹, M. E. R. Santos², H. H. Vilela¹, M. C. T. Silveira³, G. O. Rocha¹, B. D. Faria¹, and C. A. S. Freitas¹, ¹Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Viçosa, MG, Brazil, ²Faculdade de Medicina Veterinária e Zootecnia, Uberlândia, MG, Brazil, ³Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária - Pecuária Sul, Bagé, RS, Brazil.

The study was conducted to evaluate the stability index of the tiller density of the Piatã palisadegrass (*Brachiaria brizantha* 'Piatã') deferred with 3 initial heights of the sward (20, 30 and 40 cm) and 4 deferring periods (1 to 30, 31 to 60, 61 to 90, and 91 to 120 d). The experiment was carried out in the Federal University of Vicosa, in Viçosa, Minas Gerais, from March 1 to July 7, 2011. The experimental design was a complete randomized block with 3 replications in subdivided plots repeated in time. Tillering was evaluated inside of a 30 cm diameter metal ring in each experimental unit. This evaluation made it possible to calculate the stability index of the tiller density [survival rate \times (1 + appearance rate)] for the basal and aerial tillers. Data were analyzed using the SAEG (Statistical Analysis System and Genetics) and the means comparisons were made by the Student-Newman-Keuls's test at a probability of 5%. In general, the stability index values under 1.0 indicate that the survival and appearance of new tillers are not enough to compensate the death rates, and, thus, the density tends to decrease, while higher values than 1.0 suggest increase, and values near 1.0 indicate a stable tiller density, in which the number of tillers does not practically vary. The stability index of basal ($P = 0.6652$) and aerial ($P = 0.6907$) tillers was not affected by the initial deferring height, presenting, in average, 1.05 and 1.68, respectively. However, the stability index of basal ($P = 0.0007$) and aerial ($P = 0.0003$) tiller density was influenced by the deferring period. The Piatã palisadegrass deferred from 1 to 30 d (1.62 and 4.11) presented higher value of stability index of basal and aerial tillers in relation to the ones deferred from 31 to 60 (0.89 and 0.90), 61 to 90 (0.83 and 0.94) and 91 to 120 d (0.85 and 0.79), respectively.

Key Words: *Brachiaria brizantha*, grassland management, structural characteristics