

**M91** **Animal productivity on brachiaria grass deferred at different heights**<sup>1</sup>. M. C. T. Silveira<sup>1</sup>, D. M. Fonseca<sup>2</sup>, D. Nascimento Júnior<sup>\*2</sup>, M. E. R. Santos<sup>3</sup>, V. M. Gomes<sup>2</sup>, F. K. Gomes<sup>2</sup>, V. L. N. Brandão<sup>2</sup>, G. O. Rocha<sup>2</sup>, B. M. L. Sousa<sup>2</sup>, A. Deus<sup>2</sup>, R. L. Albino<sup>2</sup>, L. S. Moura<sup>2</sup>, and G. A. Borges<sup>2</sup>, <sup>1</sup>CPPSU-Embrapa Pecuária Sul, Bagé, RS, Brazil, <sup>2</sup>Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Viçosa, MG, Brazil, <sup>3</sup>Faculdade de Medicina Veterinária e Zootecnia-UFU, Uberlândia, MG, Brazil.

Pasture deferment consists of postponing the grazing in one area for utilization in the offseason period. Thus, the objective of this study was to evaluate the animal productivity on brachiaria grass pastures deferred at different heights. The experiment was conducted in a field of the Animal Science Department of Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The experimental area consisted of *Brachiaria decumbens* Stapf. 'Basilisk' pasture subdivided in 8 paddocks (experimental units), plus a reserve area, totaling approximately 3 ha. The experiment was conducted in randomized block design with 2 replicates and 4 heights at the beginning of deferment (10, 20, 30, and 40 cm). In March 2010, pastures were managed under continuous stocking and variable stocking rate, so that the heights could be established, and the deferment was started. In June 2010, the grazing on deferred pastures began. During 115 d, pastures were managed under continuous stocking, and the initial fixed stocking rate was approximately 3.0 AU/ha. The animals were growing crossbred steers, with an average weight of 190 kg. During the grazing period, cattle consumed, in addition to deferred pasture, mineral salt ad libitum. Average daily weight gain, stocking rate and production per area were measured. Variance and regression analyses at significance level up to 10% of probability were carried out. Stocking rate and animal production per area were not affected by pasture heights ( $P > 0.10$ ), with an average value of 3.78 AU/ha and 0.69 kg/ha.d. This result can be explained by the stocking rate, which was fixed at the beginning of the grazing period. These productivity rates are high for this period, since in Brazil the climatic conditions are not conducive to pasture growth. The average daily gain increased quadratically with pasture height at the beginning of deferment ( $P < 0.10$ ), with maximum value of 0.134 kg/animal.d in the pasture deferred at 20 cm. Therefore, with lowering of brachiaria pastures to 20 cm at the beginning of the deferment period, it is

possible to avoid weight loss in cattle kept on pasture, which is common during the fall and winter seasons (June to September).

**Key Words:** *Brachiaria decumbens* ‘Basilisk’, grazing management, stocking rate