

135 SELECTIVITY AND INTAKE OF SRD GOATS GRAZING DRY SEASON
CAATINGA IN NORTHEAST BRAZIL

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Four equally spaced grazing trials with goats were conducted in native caatinga from early to late dry season, 1984, to determine the effect of season and energy supplementation on diet quality and selectivity and forage intake. The trials, which began in Aug. (PER I) just as the leaves were beginning to fall, were repeated in Sept. (PER II), Oct. (PER III) and Nov. (PER IV), by which time peak leaf fall had past and the leaf litter supply was becoming limited. Eighteen mature SRD wethers, 8 of which were esophageally fistulated, were randomly divided into 2 groups. One group received corn supplementation once daily at .6 percent of body weight during each PER in a switchback design. All animals were released to graze at 36 hectare area at 0630h and returned for overnight confinement at 1700h, at which time corn was provided individually to those goats being supplemented. The non-fistulated animals were dosed with 1 gram of chromic oxide powder twice daily to estimate fecal dry matter output. The esophageally fistulated goats were used to collect extrusa samples for determination of diet digestibility *in vitro* and botanical composition. The 7 day fecal and extrusa collection phase in each of the PERs was followed by a 21 day adaptation phase prior to the next collection. T-tests showed that the proportion of woody/herbaceous material and dry leaves selected over the course of the dry season was not influenced by animal group or by supplementation ($P > .05$). Woody, as compared to herbaceous species, always accounted for the largest percentage of the diet samples ($P < .01$) and showed an increase ($P < .05$) as the dry season progressed; 80^a, 90^b, 92^{bc} and 97^c percent for PERs I-IV. Since, except in PER I, the majority of the forage selected was dry leaves from woody species; 35, 69, 59, and 62 percent for PERs I-IV, it can be concluded that leaf litter is, by percentage, the predominant diet constituent during the dry season, irrespective of supplementation.

KEY WORDS: Goat, native range, energy supplementation, selectivity, intake.

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