

Species abundance, food preference and nutritive value of goat diets in the semi-arid lands of east-central Kenya

The key forage species and nutrient composition of forage species preferred by free-ranging East African goats in rangelands of eastern-central Kenya were determined. One hundred and five forage species were identified including 30 tree, 29 shrub, 20 grass and 25 forb species. Shrubs and short trees were the most preferred forage species and thus formed the bulk of the goat diets. Ironically the forage species most preferred by the goats were not necessarily the most abundant on the ground, indicating that ease of accessibility and palatability may be important determinants for choice of a forage specie. That grasses and forbs were the least preferred could be largely explained by the fact that goats are naturally browsers.