BOTANICAL COMPOSSITION OF NATURAL PASTURE UNDER COCONUT

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Objectives of the present study were to 1) compare the simple Dry Weight Rank (DWR) method with the laborious Hand Separation (HS) for studies on botanical composition, and 2) study the botanical composition of natural pastures under coconut in the low country wet zone (Mapalana) and the coconut triangle (five sites at Kudawewa). DWR and HS were compared in five tests at the two locations. Difference between the two decreased from 23.6% to 8.2% through first to the last comparison at second location, while it decreased from 23.5% to 12.9% in the two tests at first location. With increasing experience the differences between methods narrowed, while a change of location increased it indicating the need for readjustment of judgement in new situations. A total of 51 species (15 grasses, 8 legumes and 28 other species) were recorded consisting of 25 and 41 at low country wet zone and coconut triangle, respectively. In the coconut triangle, Ichnocarpus frutescens and Borreria hispidia followed by Desmodium spp. and Cynodon dectylon predominated, while Digitaria adscerdens and Axonopus compressus dominated at the other location. Brachiaria puspaloides and B subquadripara and total of species other than grasses and legumes increased with rains in the coconut triangle. CP contents of grasses, legumes and other species ranged from 7.3% to 13.9% 14.7% to 16.9% and 5.2% to 22.5%, respectively. Dipteracanthus ringens with the highest CP (22.5%) and lowest CF (14.0%) seemed most nutritive, while Miriscus squarrous had the lowest Cp (5.21%) and high CF (30.7%).