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A preliminary study to assess the nutritive values of some browsing plants in Hambantota district

Hambantota district is comprised of shrub jungles characterized to arid and semi-arid regions. The increasing population of goats use these shrub jungles as their feeding grounds. This study was done to identify the different types of plants eaten by goats and to determine the nutritive value of these plants. Gonnoruwa was selected for this study and the study was carried out from January to June 2001. Ten goat herds were followed while they were feeding to observe their preference over different plant species. Five goats at a time were observed by five people

for ten minutes and observations carried out for one hour for each herd. The plant species that the goats had picked more than 50 times within ten minute period is considered as the most preferred and the rest were considered as less preferred plants. Crude protein (CP%), Dry Matter (DM%) and Ash (Ash %) were determined for the plants collected by the standard AOAC methods of analysis. Forty nine plant species were found in the Gonnoruwa area and out of which, 17 were refused by goats and 32 species were consumed. *Didhrostachys cinera, Capparis sepiaria, Mayterus emerginata, Prenna latifolia, Flugia leucopyrus, Tizyphus cenoplia, Randia dumentorum, Grevia corponifolia, Canthium coromandelicum, Feronia limonia, Calamus radiatus, Carissa spinarum, katubatu, katuniyanda, modarankanniya were the most preferred species found. Cordia monoica, Lantana camara, Aylanthus polyphylius, Catunnarengan spiosa, Canthium spp., Erythrina tusa, Cordia glaraf, Atlantia ceylanica, Bahuniya recemosa, Salvadora persica, Carmona microphyla, Ixora arborea, Drypetes sepriria, Diospyros ferra, Manilkara lexandra*, Mathambala and Wal uguressa were the less preferred plant species. The highest Crude Protein (CP% =24.4) was found in *Didhrostachys cinera* and it was the most preferred plant and the lowest CP% was found in *Manilkara lexandra*. But the highest Dry Matter content (66.3%) was found in *Erythrina tusa*, which was a less preferred plant. The ash content was highest (35.7%) in *Salvadora persica* and least (3.65) in *Capparis sepiaria*. The results indicated that the nutrient content had no influence on the preference of plant species. However, there are some protein rich plant species among the less preferred category.