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Tikiya (*Eleocharis dulcis*) in water logged saline lands as a ruminant feed

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Tikiya is a non-conventional forage plant, which grows, in waterlogged saline lands in Sri Lanka. The main objective of the present study was to find out the effect of feeding of Tikiya on feed intake and milk production of buffaloes. Nine lactating buffalo cows were selected and divided into 3 blocks based on the body weight (409 ± 52 kg). Animals were fed with Tikiya or CO-3 (Hybrid of Pennisetum purpureum *x* Pennissetum americarnum) or whole vegetation cover (grass+ Legume+ Sedges + other shrubs) with 3 kg of rice (*Oryza sativa*) bran and 50 g of mineral mixture per day. Stall feeding (*Adlibitum*) was practised. Feeding trial was conducted for 15 days. Feed intake and milk production of animals were measured daily. Data were statistically analysed and means were separated using LSD.

Dry matter content of Tikiya (27%) was much higher ($P<0.05$) compared to CO-3 (17.4%) and whole vegetation (18.5%) however, crude protein content of Tikiya (9%) was much lower ($P<0.05$) compared to CO-3 (12%) or whole vegetation (13.6%). Furthermore dry matter intake of Tikiya (75 $g/kg^{.75}/d$) was much higher ($P<0.05$) compared to CO-3 (65 $g/kg^{.75}/d$) or whole vegetation (65 $g/kg^{.75}/d$). Milk production of buffalo cows consuming CO-3 (3750 ml/d) was higher compared to Tikiya (3050 ml/d) or whole vegetation (3000 ml/d) even though they were not significantly different from each other. This higher production in cows fed with CO-3 may be related with higher quality of that feed compared to other two diets. Therefore, Tikiya can be considered as palatable forage, which can be fed to buffaloes without affecting their milk production.

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