

Nutritive value of six hill communities and the diet selected on them by two different breeds of sheep (Churra vs Merina).

A.R. Mantecón, P.R. Revesado, P. Lavín, P. Frutos.

Estación Agrícola Experimental-CSIC. Apdo. 788. 24080 León. España.

The aim of this work is to know the nutritive value of six hill communities, and the diet selected on them by two different breeds of sheep (Churra and Merina) during summer grazing period. Six hill communities were studied: *Nardus stricta*, *Bromus erectus*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica arborea*, *Genista occidentalis* and *Genista florida*, during the last week of June, July, August and September 1990, and eight oesophageal fistulated wether lambs (four Churro and four Merino) were used according to a 6x4x2 factorial design. In vitro dry matter digestibility (IVDMD), crude protein (CP) and neutral detergent fibre (NDF) were determined in all samples. The effect of community, period and their interaction were significantly different for IVDMD, CP and NDF content of the sward on offer. IVDMD got the higher value in *Bromus erectus* and *Genista occidentalis* (0.52), nevertheless in both plant communities the smaller NDF content were found (0.58 and 0.62 respectively). In a similar form, IVDMD, CP and NDF content of the diet selected were statistically affected ($P < 0.001$) by the effect of the community type, period and their interaction but there were no statistical differences between both breeds of sheep. IVDMD of the diet selected was higher in *Nardus stricta* and *Genista florida* (0.54 and 0.52, respectively) and also the NDF content got the highest values in both of them (0.68 and 0.65). These results will be discussed. As conclusion, the nutritive value of six hill plant communities studied changes during summer grazing season and the intensity of food selection and diet characteristics were affected by breed of sheep (Churra vs Merina).