



BACKGROUND: Milk production in Zebu cattle is limited by low genetic potentials, poor nutrition and poor management practices. Parasite infestations, heat stress and scarcity of feed during the dry season further reduces productivity of these animals. Interventions to improve milk yield and performance of Zebu cattle at the University of Ibadan include fodder cropping, silage production, tick control and evaporative cooling of cows. Their potentials to enhance milk output and productivity of Zebu cattle in Nigeria and other tropical countries have been reported.



FODDER CROPPING:

Cattle feeding at the University combines restricted grazing with cut fodder, silage and concentrates. Cultivated fodder include; Guinea grass, elephant grass (Napier), maize, gliricidia and moringa. These are offered as fresh-cut fodder or silage



SILAGE PRODUCTION:

After grazing, composite silage is offered to cattle at barn on a daily basis. Silage consists of combinations of elephant grass, cassava peel, brewer's grains, legumes or moringa. Additional silage at barn improved growth rate of heifers by 100% and milk yield of cows by 125%

TICK CONTROL: Ticks and associated diseases cause serious setbacks to cattle production in the tropics. Cypermethrin spray was used to control ticks on a monthly basis. Babesia infection in the animals reduced drastically and growth rate of heifers increased by 121%

EVAPORATIVE COOLING OF COWS: Adaptive response of Zebu cattle to heat stress is reduced metabolic rates. Application of cooling measures (direct wetting + fans) reduced rectal temperature of heifers from 39.3 to 38.2°C and increased intake from 2.08 to 3.78% of body weight

CONCLUSION:

Milk output and performance of Zebu cattle can be enhanced when practices highlighted above are adopted at farm level. Measures must however be taken to demonstrate the profit-potential of these practices to the local farmer.



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ATTENTION !