

INTRODUCTION

Many workers have shown the leaf of herbage grasses to have a higher nutritive value than stem and that animals tend to select leaf in preference to stem since it is more palatable. In any case it is chiefly the leaf that is available to the grazing animal especially on closely grazed pastures.

Fagan, Milton and Provan (1928) state that pastures vary during the growing season in their feeding value, and that this variation is found to be connected with the leaf to stem ratio of the herbage. The proportion of leaf to stem is therefore important in determining the nutritive value of a grass.

Under temperate conditions, where the accumulation of agricultural knowledge is much greater, much research has been conducted into the many aspects of the nutritive value of grasses. In the Tropics however, where Animal Nutrition research workers are still investigating more fundamental problems, little attention has been paid to the botanical composition of the grass plant and the chemical composition of these components.

This investigation is concerned with the leafiness of twelve tropical grasses and some of the factors affecting it in Trinidad. No information has been obtained as to the chemical composition of the leaf and stem of these grasses, but it is assumed, not unjustifiably, that the leaf is of higher nutritive value than the stem.

A knowledge of the leafiness of different grasses, together with the other characteristics of agricultural importance, may prove useful in the evaluation of a species for a particular purpose.

This study should however be regarded as being of an empirical nature to form the basis for more detailed investigations. It is the first investigation of leafiness to be carried out at the College and should provide useful information for future experimentation, particularly with regard to experimental material and method.