

FEEDING SALTBUSH WITH WHEAT HEADER RESIDUE TO SHEEP

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This study investigated whether feeding oldman saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*) and threshed wheat residue from a header (wheat header residue) as a mixture would improve feed intake and utilisation by young sheep relative to feeding the two components independently. Three groups of 7 Merino weaners were fed *ad libitum* either oldman saltbush (hand picked and air dried to 80% DM), wheat header residue or a 2:3 mixture of both for 12 days. During days 1-6, the dry matter intake (DMI) of the mixed diet (583 g/d) was significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) than that of the header residue (419 g/d) or saltbush (349 g/d) fed alone. This trend continued from day 7-12 when intake of the mixture was 872 g/d, compared to an intake of 540 g/d of header residue or 500 g/d of saltbush. The sheep fed the mixture lost the least weight (49 g/d), whereas those fed header residue or saltbush lost 192 and 218 g/d respectively. The rate of wool growth of the sheep fed the mixture (0.76 mg/cm².d) was higher ($P < 0.05$) than the sheep fed header residue (0.6 mg/cm².d) but not different from the sheep fed saltbush (0.74 mg/cm².d). These results indicate complementarity and a potential for improved utilisation of both feedstuffs by feeding them together. Longer term feeding needs to be evaluated but was not possible in this experiment since, on day 15, the wheat header residue was found to contain ryegrass seeds with corynetoxin and the experiment was terminated.

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