

CONSTRUINDO SABERES, FORMANDO PESSOAS E TRANSFORMANDO A PRODUÇÃO ANIMAL

INCLUSION OF CHOPPED HAY IN FEEDLOT DIETS BASED ON WHOLE CORN GRAIN

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Addition of fiber carbohydrate in high-concentrate feedlot diets might promote a healthier ruminal environment, leading to less digestive disturbance and thus improve performance of confined animals. The aim of this study was to assess the effect of chopped hay levels in the feedlot diet based on whole corn grain (WCG) on performance, rumen health, feeding behavior and carcass traits of beef heifers. Eighteen Angus yearling heifers (303.3 ± 11 kg) were randomly distributed to three treatment: 85% WCG + 15% of pelleted supplement (CT), 82% WCG + 15% of pelleted supplement and 3% of *Cynodon* sp. hay (H3), and 79% WCG + 15% of pelleted supplement and 6% of *Cynodon* sp. hay (H6) for 112 days. Dry matter intake increased linearly ($P = 0.035$) by the inclusion of hay, however final body weight (average 426.7 ± 11.7 kg), average daily gain (average 1.18 ± 0.07 kg/day), hot carcass weight (average 221.9 ± 10.2 kg), subcutaneous fat thickness (average 7.17 ± 1.2 mm), and dressing percentage (average 52.24 ± 0.48 %) were not affected by hay levels. The pH of rumen fluid sampled after slaughter was affected positively ($P = 0.047$) as the hay levels increased. However, no effect was observed in the number of rumen papillae per cm² (average 52.64 ± 4.6). Time spent eating (average 105 ± 19 min), laying (average 638 ± 43 min) and standing (average 374 ± 42 min) in idleness and lying ruminating (average 205 ± 29 min) did not differ among treatments, but the time standing ruminating linearly increased ($P = 0.0003$) by the inclusion of hay. The use of WCG without roughage seems to do not impair performance and carcass traits of beef heifers.

Keywords: beef heifers, carcass traits, performance

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