



High quality feeding to ewes

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In the past, pruning residuals of olive trees, were considered only as firewood (branches of larger diameter) and as waste to burn, (leaves and smaller twigs). This practice is now obsolete and the valorization of this residual is crucial for a better management of the olive grove. Le leaves may be a good feed for animals.

Olive trees in Mediterranean grazing systems offer many advantages. During the hot and dry summer, the shade of the olive trees provides a better animal welfare and better climatic conditions for the development of the grass; on the contrary, during the winter, when the pastures are poor in herbs, the olive trees provide a high quality feeding to ewes from the pruning residuals.

The nutritive value of olive leaves is greater when fed fresh, although dry leaves may be incorporated in the diet. When olive leaves are rich in oil, ruminal protozoa decrease, and this could increase the efficiency of microbial protein synthesis in the rumen.

It has also been observed that for lactating animals olive leaves result in an improvement in milk fat quality compared to diets based on conventional forages (E.Molina-Alcaide & D.R.Yáñez-Ruiz, 2008). Olive tree leaves are by-products with high linolenic acid content, which can be used as dietary ingredients to increase conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) content of milk fat in sheep (Tsiplakou et al. 2008). Feeding olive tree leaves to ewes has also a positive effect on fatty acid profile of cheese improving its nutrition quality (Giacinti G. et al., 2016).

References

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Figure 1. Sheep eating olive leaves in a silvopastoral system.

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