DIGESTIVE EFFICIENCY OF WAPITI WITH VARIATION IN DIET: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract: Rate of fermentation and digestion of three diets of fistulated wapiti (Cervus elaphus nelsoni), moose (Alces alces) and cattle were studied during mid-summer. The animals were fed diets of alfalfa/grass hay, alfalfa and alfalfa/aspen, in 12 day trials, spaced 3 weeks apart. The rate of digestion of grass and hay and aspen in nylon bags suspended in the rumen of wapiti was higher than in moose and cattle. The potential digestibility of the alfalfa dry matter, in wapiti, was 6.3% and 14.5% higher than the grass hay or aspen diets, respectively. Wapiti appear to obtain this asymptotic level more rapidly than moose or cattle.