

PROCEEDINGS



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A NEW VIEW  
OF ANIMAL SCIENCE:

CHALLENGES AND  
PERSPECTIVES

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# A NEW VIEW OF ANIMAL SCIENCE: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

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## **THEME 9 | RUMINANT NUTRITION AND PRODUCTION**

### **Milk production in grazing beef cattle in Uruguay: influence of cow parity**

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Energy requirements of beef cows during lactation are increased due to milk production. There are many factors influencing milk production potential and calves weaning weight and cow parity could be one of those. The aim of this study was to estimate the effect of dam parity on milk production of beef cattle grazing native pastures in Uruguay. Three hundred ninety-seven, Angus and Angus x Hereford, primiparous (3 years old, n = 151) and multiparous (4 to 10 years old, n = 246) cows from different experiments over ten years were analyzed. Cows Live Weight (LW) and Body Condition Score (BCS; scale 1 to 8 u) at calving were  $402 \pm 4.77$  kg and  $4.2 \pm 0.06$  u for primiparous and  $430 \pm 2.99$  kg and  $4.1 \pm 0.04$  u for multiparous cows, (mean  $\pm$  sem). All cows calved in spring and grazed native pastures at a forage allowance of 8 to 12 kg dry matter per kg of LW. Milk production was estimated with the following procedure: at 6am cows were separated from calves and each cow was injected with oxytocin (20 IU) to promote milk letdown. Cows were milked 2 minutes after the injection using a milking machine. In the afternoon, at ~14 pm cows were milked again (after oxytocin injection) following the same procedure and milk amount was weighed. In that period calves remained in another paddock separated from their dams. Milk production was assessed monthly until weaning (190 days on average). Milk yield was analyzed with cubic splines with 4 equally spaced knots. The model considers the effect of the dam's parity. No differences in milk production between cows of four to ten years old were evident ( $P = 0.53$ ) therefore they were grouped for the final analysis. Milk production for the lactation period was  $1005 \pm 0.71$  L and  $1030 \pm 0.76$  L for primiparous and multiparous cows, respectively ( $P = 0.63$ ). Calves LW at birth was lower ( $P < 0.05$ ) in primiparous ( $35.4 \pm 0.41$  kg) than multiparous cows ( $36.1 \pm 0.33$  kg) and at weaning ( $164.6 \pm 2.81$  kg and  $178.6 \pm 1.67$  kg for primiparous and multiparous cows, respectively). It is well documented that primiparous cows present lower milk production when compared with multiparous cows, since they have higher energy requirements to fulfill growing needs. No differences in milk production by parity were found in this study even though multiparous weaned heavier calves than primiparous cows. It is hypothesized that other factors could be explaining those differences such as calves vigor, milk fat content and/or grazing behavior.

**Keywords:** milk production, beef cattle, parity, range conditions