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INTRODUCTION OF LEUCAENA LEUCOCEPHALA IN THE ARID CHACO OF VILLA
DOLORES, ARGENTINA

Leucaena was introduced in the area of Villa Dolores (31° 57' South latitude) in 1975 as a forage, and showed swift adaptation. A program was then initiated for its study, which includes a live Germplasm Bank, evaluation tests, utilization methods, selection and multiplication of seeds. The collection is made up of more than 40 accessions including varieties for afforestation and/or forage. These were collected during survey trips to Australia, Brazil, the Caribbean, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Fiji, Philippines, Hawaii, India, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela.

At present 10 has are planted with the Peru variety, which are intended initially to the production of meal and then to the production of pellets to be used as high protein concentrates (18.6%).

The percentage of gross protein contained in the leaves of different accessions varies between 12.5% and 23.1%.

For the production of meat it is utilized in direct pasture through two main systems:

a) Protein Banks
b) Consociations

Experiments using two groups of young Nelore animals showed that a supplementation with Leucaena meal of 0.60 kgs/day/animal and a control (no leucaena) produced weight gains of 0.50 kgs/day/animal and 0.35 kgs/day/animal respectively.

The present aim of the experiments is to obtain plants with a greater resistance to drought and low temperature, by carrying out selections within the germplasm of the collection, and at the same time it is also an objective to continue its increase.