THE RELATION OF TANNIN CONTENT OF SERICEA LESPEDEZA TO SEASON1

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AS a forage crop for hay and pasture on land of low fertility in the southeastern part of the United States, few plants can compete in yield and drought resistance with sericea lespedeza, Lespedeza cuneata (Dum. de Cours) G. Don.3 It is probable, however, that the extended use of this plant has been retarded to some extent by conflicting reports regarding its palatability and feeding value. The literature dealing with these points has been adequately reviewed by Clarke, Frey, and Hyland4 and by Pieters,5 and need not be further discussed here.

Clarke, Frey, and Hyland6 suggested that tannin may be the cause for the apparent dislike some animals have for sericea and reported on the tannin content of samples of hay harvested at weekly intervals from May 29 to July 31. This is the period during which sericea would be cut for hay. They found a progressive increase in tannin up until the end of July, but had no data to show whether or not there was any change in the fall.

The tannin content of sericea during the latter half of the growing season would be of particular interest to those who use it for grazing. This is especially true since much of the controversy regarding palatability of sericea is based on observations of grazing animals.7

In the present report analyses are given of plants harvested throughout the growing season.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

During the season of 1936, samples of sericea (Lespedeza cuneata, F.C. No. 17291) were harvested at Statesville, N. C., at 14-day intervals from May 5 to October 20. The material for analysis was all first-cutting hay obtained from square-yard areas on random-selected duplicate plots in a field seeded in 1931.

1Cooperative investigations of the Hides, Tanning Materials, and Leather Division, Eastern Regional Research Laboratory, Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering and the Division of Forage Crops and Diseases, Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture; and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, Raleigh, N. C. Received for publication March 26, 1941.
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3This perennial lespedeza has been called Lespedea sericea Benth. up to the present time by the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture. According to the international nomenclature, however, it is Lespedeza cuneata (Dum. de Cours) G. Don and the name Lespedea sericea, therefore, has been dropped as a scientific name for this plant. However, sericea, or sericea lespedeza, is used herein as a common name because it is already established and doubtless will continue to be used by farmers and others interested in the plant.
6Loc. cit.
7See footnote 5.
739 Published August, 1941