

Summary

The effect of the deferral period (E1 = January 20, E2 = February 3, E3 = March 6, and E4 = March 17) and of the utilization period (every 28 days between July 21 and October 27) on the production and quality of *Centrosema pubescens* was studied at the Empresa de Pesquisa Agropecuária de Minas Gerais, Brazil (EPAMIG; 19° 28' S and 44° 15' W). Treatments were laid out in an experimental design of split plots with four replications.

In the first harvest, after 120 days of growth in the rainy period, the average DM production of *C. pubescens* was higher when deferral took place in January (E1 = 1.74 ± 0.75 t/ha) and similar in the rest of the periods (E2 = 1.04 ± 0.44 , E3 = 1.03 ± 0.33 , E4 = 0.98 ± 0.45 t/ha). These differences remained constant even during the critical dry-season period from June to September. Average green-leaf content in the dry period was similar for the first three deferral periods (38%) and higher for the fourth period

(E4 = 51%). IVDMD of the whole plant (47%) was independent from the deferral period; on the contrary, it varied in the green leaves among periods (E1 = $55 \pm 1.8\%$; E2 = $51 \pm 7.8\%$; E3 = $48 \pm 5.1\%$; E4 = $53 \pm 2.2\%$). Results emphasize the importance of quality of this species when deferring forages for critical periods. In this sense, legumes such as *Centrosema pubescens*, capable of maintaining green leaves during the second half of the dry period, have advantages opposite to grasses.