

For theses, the abstract should be concise, clear and to the point. Here follows an example, please use this as a template.

TITLE: Facilitation between bovids and equids on an African savanna

ABSTRACT

Background: Equids, especially zebras and donkeys, and cattle (bovids) share habitats in many savanna ecosystems in Africa. The issue of competition for food between these ungulate guilds remains largely unresolved. Resolving it will provide insights into how wild zebra are likely to interact with cattle on shared landscapes and suggest best practices for cattle owners who must decide whether to tolerate wild ungulates, some of which are severely threatened (e.g., Grevy's zebra, *Equus grevyi*).

Aim: Determine whether an equid and a bovid compete in a semi-arid savanna in Kenya.

Organisms: Boran cattle (*Bos indicus*) and donkeys (*Equus africanus asinus*) – the latter as surrogates for zebras.

Place of research: Mpala Research Farm. Laikipia District, northern Kenya.

Methodology: Experiments to measure performance (weight gains), bite rates, diet quality (digestible organic matter and crude protein), and gastrointestinal worm burdens (parasite egg count per unit weight of faeces) of the two ungulate species when herded separately (single species) or together (mixed species). We used two stocking levels: low-density (one animal per 7 ha), a level typical of commercial ranchers; and high-density (one animal per 2 ha), a level typical of pastoral herders.

Principal findings: When herded together, both species gained more weight, had higher bite rates (especially at low stocking density), and selected diets with a more favourable balance between digestible organic matter and crude protein, than when herded separately. In addition, parasite egg output in faeces of donkeys was reduced by 14–35% following shared foraging with cattle.

Conclusion: Cattle (a ruminant) and donkeys (hindgut fermenters, closely related to zebras) showed no evidence of competition with each other. Rather, our results show a facilitative, rather than a competitive, interaction between them.

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