

===== DYNAMICS OF ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR COMPONENTS =====

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**PLANT FORAGE RESOURCES AND THEIR DIVISION BY HERBIVOROUS  
MAMMALS DURING JOINT GRAZING ON A STEPPE PASTRY**

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We investigated 4 species of herbivorous mammals with different digestive systems exhibiting dietary selectivity toward forbs and true grasses, which differ in their nutritional value, primarily, their digestibility. Saiga antelopes, just like other animals with high dietary selectivity that consume easily digestible foods, prefer forbs of high digestibility and avoid less digestible true grasses. If true grasses make up most of the pastures and saiga have no other choice but to feed on them, the saiga population turns unviable. Horses and bison, like other equines and large ruminants that are highly specialized in feeding off true grasses, successfully utilize them despite their poor digestibility, but avoid forbs. It is clear that they exclude forbs from their diet due to the increased toxicity of the latter. Camels do not discriminate between true grasses and forbs with different nutrition values. Currently, they actively graze in fallow lands (former arable land), overgrown with weeds, which other herbivores avoid. Differences in forage plant selection of different animal species grazing together ensure that they share the same pasture successfully, eliminate competition, and help to preserve the species diversity of pasture vegetation.

*Keywords:* herbivorous mammals, pasture plants, grasses and forbs, forage digestibility, feeding selectivity.

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