

Supplementary feed in dry times

Ritlee has introduced an optional grinding attachment for the 225 model chipper. Joe Spencer reports.

It is well known that cattle will eat wattle saplings and even browse the lower leaves off trees in times of scarcity. More recently, an investigation into the palatability of indigenous bushes and trees has identified more than 100 plants as potentially suitable for conversion into auxiliary feed, according to Marc Custers of Ritlee Executech.

With this in mind, Ritlee has introduced an optional grinding attachment for its Model 225 wood chipper. The 225 has been available for more than a decade, both as a tractor-mounted PTO drive machine and a trailer-mounted unit powered by its own engine. With the grinding attachment, the 225 can now be used to grind bush and trees in one operation to produce supplementary feed for cattle or game.

THE CHIPS ARE GROUND DOWN TO A TEXTURE SUITABLE FOR USE AS FEED

When the trapdoor of the modified chipper is open, 80% of the material emerges as chips. When it is closed, the chips are ground to a finer texture for feed and passed through a grille with 10mm, 13mm, 15mm or 20mm holes.

The woodchipper's gravity-fed system has always had the capacity to process pine, eucalyptus, citrus, wattle and similar trees for feed effectively. Processing acacia-type bush and trees for feed, however,



ABOVE: The Ritlee 225 chipper/grinder with PTO drive.



ABOVE: The Ritlee 225 chipper with optional grinder.

LEFT: Late-lactating cows eating a mix of 90% freshly ground black wattle and 10% maize residue chop. PHOTOS: RITLEE

has proved a problem. The new hydraulic feed rollers can grind thorny, bushy material with ease.

Farmers in Botswana and Namibia have been using the modified 225 to work with *swarthaak*, (*Acacia mellifera*) and *haak-en-steek* (*Acacia tortilis*), both of which become inflexible when dry. Farmers in the Eastern Cape, too, report that they have been using it to process black wattle and feed it freshly ground to cows drying off. It would appear that the tannin content is lower if the material is freshly chopped, and additives are available to combat any negative effects.

• Joe Spencer is the mechanisation editor of Farmer's Weekly. For more information on the equipment in this report, email him at farmersweekly@caxton.co.za. Subject line: Equipment. ■FW

See for yourself

Visit ritlee.co.za for information on the results of tests conducted by Cedara and other institutions on feed produced by the Ritlee 225 grinder from wattle, black thorn and similar plants. Suggestions for mixes and

additives are also provided. The website contains a list, with pictures, of more than 160 indigenous bushes with common names, registered names and palatability. Ritlee welcomes farmers' comments in this regard.



ABOVE: Ground black wattle.