

Twenty four crossbred unsexed weaner rabbits of about seven (7) weeks old with mean body weight of 528.75g

were used in a feeding trial involving four dietary treatments containing 0, 10, 15, and 20% inclusion levels of dried pinto

mash (DPM) in a completely randomized design study that lasted for seven (7) weeks. The animals were randomly divided

into four (4) treatment groups consisting of six (6) animals per group. Each treatment group was replicated three (3) times

with two (2) animals per replicate. The parameters studied were daily feed intake, daily weight gain, feed conversion ratio,

carcass yield, organ weights, haematological and biochemical components of rabbits, and cost benefit analysis of replacing

maize with DPM in rabbit diets. The inclusion of DPM in rabbit diets did not significantly ($p>0.05$) influence the daily

feed intake of the animals. There was a slight reduction in the daily weight gain of animals with the inclusion of DPM from

0% to 20%. The slaughter weight and dressed weight decreased significantly ($p<0.05$) as the level of DPM in the

experimental diets increased. Rabbits fed the control diet (0% DPM) and the diet containing 10% DPM had significantly

higher ($p<0.05$) dressing percentage than rabbits fed diets containing 15% and 20% DPM inclusion levels. However, there

were no significant ($p>0.05$) dietary treatment effect on the heart, lungs, liver, spleen and kidney weights when they were

expressed as percentage of the live body weight of the rabbits fed the four treatment diets. The feeding of DPM to rabbits

did not show significant ($p>0.05$) variation in both the haematological and biochemical components of the rabbits studied

and they were within the normal physiological ranges for rabbits. The total feed cost/kg was significantly reduced ($p<0.05$)

as the inclusion levels of DPM in the diets increased. Therefore, the control diet (0% DPM) was more expensive than the

diets containing 15% and 20% DPM, respectively. Also, the cost of feed/kg live weight gain was significantly higher

($p < 0.05$) for the control diet (0% DPM) when compared with the other treatment diets. The results of this study suggest

that DPM could completely replace maize up to 20% without any detrimental effect on the growth performance of rabbits.

And since the total feed cost was significantly reduced as the inclusion levels of DPM in the rabbit diets increased, indicate

that it is possible to produce rabbits at relatively cheaper prices when the maize component of the diets is completely

replaced by DPM up to 20%.

Keywords: weaner rabbits, growth performance, dried pinto mash, maize, carcass characteristics, haematological and biochemical

components, cost benefit analysis.