Production characteristics and constraints of rabbit farming in Central, Nairobi and Rift-valley provinces in Kenya


P.O. Box 2256 Postal code: 00202, Nairobi, Kenya; charityhungu@gmail.com * Department of Veterinary Pathology, Microbiology and Parasitology- University of Nairobi. P.O. Box 29053 – 00625, Nairobi, Kenya.

Abstract
Studies on rabbit production in Kenya have not included in-depth analysis of the potentials of keeping rabbits in the rural and urban household setting. In this study questionnaire and examination sheets were used to record the information. The results of this research revealed that rabbit farmers in Central, Nairobi and Rift Valley provinces practice small scale farming essentially due to small land space, which if well adopted, can be practiced widely. There was sustained interest in rabbit farming which was shown by a large proportion of farmers (51%) who had kept rabbits between 1 and 5 years. The most common breeds of rabbits kept were New Zealand white (73%), Californian (60%) and their cross breeds (51%) which were all suitable for meat production. This study revealed that farmers had limited access to technical information in rabbit farming and this was seen in the poor design and construction of the rabbit hutches. Majority of farmers (64%) bought their breeding stock from other farmers, with only a small proportion buying from breeding centres (17%). This practice of buying replacement stock among farmers was likely to lead to inbreeding. The major constraints of rabbit farming are those dealing with production; disease (83%), predators like rats (29%), death of rabbits (69%) and unavailability of rabbit feed (19%). The results also indicated that there are opportunities and challenges to increase rabbit production in the country though access to technology and marketing strategies are major hindrances to this development.

Key words: disease, inbreeding, small scale farming