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ANIMAL HUSBANDRY OF RABBITS USED AS HOSTS FOR G. MORBITAN  
COLONIES

BY MISS. LUBUVA, J.J.

1974

The first rabbits to arrive at our Laboratory were the lop-eared variety. A total of 8 rabbits were brought from Vienna, Austria by Dr. E. Cffori on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1974. Two months later, two of these had died from internal abscesses of the heart and kidney. Five out of the remaining six have performed well and have been used for fly feeding and breeding experiments.

In late May, 10 New Zealand white rabbits were purchased from Ledlett farm in Nairobi Kenya. One of these died due to stomach obstruction. The remaining 9 adults have performed well. Finally, 6 lop-eared rabbits were received from Langford England in August this year.

Our main interest is to learn if we can successfully maintain and rear lop-eared rabbits in Tanzania. These rabbits are not common to the tropics and other agencies have experienced difficulties in attempting to rear them in East Africa. The room where these rabbits are reared is kept at approximately 24°C. The floor of the building is washed with plain water three times each week. The rabbit hutches were designed to allow free air movement and maximum sanitation. Wire mesh floors in wooden frame hutches allow wastes to fall into trays that are filled with sawdust. The trays are emptied, cleaned and re-filled again with clean saw-dust 3 times per week. The saw dust is obtained freely.

The dimensions of each hutch which houses one rabbit is 2 ft. for the length width and height, three days before the expected date of parturation (that is approximately 26 days after mating the rabbits) we place brood boxes inside the hutches with fertilized females. The brood boxes are made of plywood, and wood shavings are put inside for nesting material. Two weeks after parturation, the brood boxes are removed from the hutches and at Eight weeks the young rabbits are weaned.

It is fortunate that rabbit pellets are now available in Tanga. The formulation of food was supplied by the National Milling Company and does not contain material harmful to flies that feed on the rabbit ears. Females with young are given 8 ounces of pellets per day. ½ of this is given in the morning and the remaining half is given in the afternoon. All others are given 4 ounces of pellets per day and the feeding is divided into two. In addition to the pellets fresh roughage such as accaspia leaves and Rhodes grass are placed in the cages once each day.

The watering devices consists of a metal dish with an inverted bottle. The water is changed every day. Attempts to purchase salt licks for the animals have not been successful. At present we are using salt powder which is being mixed with the pellets. Each rabbit is given ½ a teaspoon of this salt powder, per day.

Monthly weighing of rabbits is performed as one means of assessing the condition of all the rabbits. Each rabbit is weighed individually on a scale and the weight is recorded. An example of the weight chart is shown here.

IDENTIFICATION	DATE	WEIGHT		REMARKS
		KG.	GRAMS	
MOROGORO	June 1st	2	700	Bad teeth but good health
	July 1st	3	500	Healthy
	Aug. 1st	4	800	Healthy
	Sept. 3rd	4	300	Produced 7 young

Since arriving at this laboratory all rabbits have improved slightly in weight.

Our problems todate concerning rabbits have included such disease as sore hocks, ophthalmia, wet chin and abscesses. Sore hocks are being treated with sulphathiazole ointment to heal the abbrassions; Ophthalmia is being treated with terra-cortil ointment and wet chin with Savlon Cream.

Our rabbit census at present is 46. This consists of 22 adults and 24 young ones. We can house about 30 adults in our present facilities and we are in the process of expanding our present rabbit house.