

Influence of the watering time on growth and solid feed intake of rabbits submitted to a restriction in the duration of water availability

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Rabbits submitted to a restriction in the daily duration watering also limited their feed intake after a more or less long period of adaptation.

Two experiments made on 80 and 48 growing New Zealand white rabbits respectively (from 750 or 1 000 g to 2 400 g) were realized with the purpose of studying :

- The influence of the watering time on the solid feed intake and growth.
- The adaptative ability of the rabbits to a water restriction.

Whatever the time of watering (9 a.m., 9 p.m. or 9 a.m. + 9 p.m.) the feed intake level and growth rate of the rabbits submitted to water restriction were reduced as compared to the controls watered *ad libitum* :

— The adaptation to a water restriction was easier when the supply was at 9 a.m. rather than at 9 p.m. and in the rabbits of 750 g rather than in those of 1 000 g.

— The supplying of water twice a day (9 a.m. and 9 p.m.) did not improve either the growth or the feed intake as compared to a single supply at 9 a.m.

The feed conversion ratio was similar in rabbits watered *ad libitum* or at 9 a.m.; it was increased in rabbits watered at 9 p.m. and in those subjected to a late adaptation.

Chemical composition of crossbred young 35 days old rabbits nitrogen and minerals

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The chemical composition of a strain of crossbred rabbits (white New Zealand × Californian × small Russian × meat line) was determined on 50 rabbits of 35 days.

The mean live weight was 789 ± 82 g and the dry matter content of the animal without digesta was 31.7 ± 2.5 p. 100.

Within the total dry matter of the body, the crude proteins represented 70.2 p. 100 with a coefficient of variation (CV) of 2.1 p. 100. Calcium and phosphorus represented 4.4 and 2.7 p. 100, respectively of the dry matter with coefficients of variation of 16 and 14 p. 100.

Mg, Na, K and Cl contents as compared to dry matter were 0.14 (CV : 6 p. 100), 0.44 (CV : 2 p. 100), 0.97 (CV : 3 p. 100) and 0.50 p. 100 (CV : 2 p. 100), respectively.

The authors, underline the large homogeneity of their results except for Ca and P contents.