

young). We studied the feeding effects on the number of young rabbits at birth and their performance at 70 days of age.

From the obtained information, we conclude that:

- doe-rabbits showed a racial heterogeneity which had an effect on production process;
- it is necessary to have a better bromatology knowledge of fibrous materials for a better use in rabbit feeding having regard to their low cost;
- Feed for rabbits with high energy levels (DE) gives better results; the 3 150 kcal digestible Energy/kg when adding fat are equivalent to 3 000 kcal metabolisable Energy/kg.
- In experimental rooms of small research units with controlled environment, we must use pure-bred or high level selected rabbits;
- When using fibrous materials in rabbit feeding, attention has to be paid to technological aspects, feed palatability and addition of synthesis amino-acids.

Energy and digestible protein concentration of diets Effects on growth performances of rabbits

Chantal DEHALLE

*Laboratoire de Recherches sur l'Élevage du Lapin, I.N.R.A.
B.P. 12 — 31320 Castanet Tolosan (France)*

Sixty 5 week-old rabbits of both sexes were offered 4 diets with a digestible energy value of 2 320 kcal/kg or 2 730 kcal/kg and 49.4 or 58.3 g digestible protein per 1 000 kcal digestible energy. At the end of the 5 week experimental period the animals were slaughtered to determine the energy and protein balances. The apparent digestibility was studied during the third experimental week. Replacement of starch by straw decreased the digestible energy content of the diets. But, protein digestibility of the different diets was not affected. When the digestible energy concentrations in the diets decreased, the animals kept their daily digestible energy intake fairly constant and maintained their growth rate. The digestible proteins/digestible energy ratio did not significantly affect either the apparent digestibility of the different nutrients, or the growth performances. The efficiency of protein deposition was higher when the digestible protein digestible energy ratio was low.

Effects of dietary metabolisable energy concentration and physical form of the diet on the performance of growing rabbits

D. H. MACHIN (1), Catherine BUTCHER (2), E. OWEN (2), M. BRYANT (2), J. E. OWEN

(1) *Tropical Products Institute, 56-62 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8 LU (United Kingdom).*

(2) *Reading University, Department of Agriculture and Horticulture, Earley Gate, Reading RG6 2 AT (United Kingdom).*

This study was carried out to assess the ability of rabbits to use diets of various nutrient density and form.

In this study, 24 seven week old Californian rabbits (initial weight 1.44 ± 0.33 kg) were pair-fed 2 diets in 3 physical forms. The 2 diets (8 M/D and 12 M/D) were formulated to contain 8 and 12 MJ/kg dry matter using ruminant metabolisable energy values. Crude protein content was 160 g/kg dry matter. Ground barley straw was the main fibre source. Diets were