

Dietary Inclusion of African-bread Fruit (*Treculia africana*) Pulp on Growth Performance and Haematological Indices of Weaner Rabbits

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In the pursuit to achieve food security and address the challenge of dietary protein deficiency in Sub-Saharan African countries, this study investigates novel approaches to ensure year-round, cost-effective meat production. Chekwube M. Ugwu and Augustine O. Ani affiliated with the Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nigeria Nsukka, join forces with Nnenna W. Anizoba, Celestine Ezenwosu and Amarachi L. Obinna in the same University.

This study investigated the response in growth performance and haematological parameters of rabbits fed dietary inclusion of dried African bread-fruit pulp (DABP). A total of sixty 6-week-old hybrid (New Zealand white) rabbits with an average weight of 759.5 g were randomly assigned to 5 dietary groups with 4 replicates of 3 rabbits each for 8 weeks in a completely randomized design. The groups were fed diets containing dried African bread-fruit pulp (DABP) at 0, 5, 10, 15, and 20% levels (coded as (DABP 0, DABP 5, DABP 10, and DABP 20). Results showed that dietary dried African bread-fruit pulp supplementation at 15 and 20% decreased ($P < 0.05$) the feed intake (FI) and body weight gain (BWG). However, rabbit at 15 and 20% showed decreased ($P < 0.05$) packed cell volume (PCV), white blood cell (WBC) and haemoglobin concentration (Hb). Based on the results obtained from the present study, it was concluded that up to 5-10% inclusion level of dried African bread-fruit pulp can be incorporated into rabbit diets without negatively affecting growth performance and haematological traits of rabbits.