

## VII AMERICAN RABBIT CONGRESS

VARADERO, CUBA, 12<sup>TH</sup>-13<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2022.

Last October 12 and 13, 2022, the VII American Rabbit Congress took place within the framework of the 2022 Animal Production and Agro-Development Convention, held from October 10 to 14 2022 at the Plaza America Convention Centre in Varadero, Matanzas, Cuba. The VII American Rabbit Congress was presented in a hybrid way (in person and online) with specialists, researchers, professors, students, breeders and producers from different latitudes related to rabbit farming and science. Throughout the conference, a total of 50 people attended in person and 15 online, mainly from Cuba, Mexico, Argentina and Spain. The aim of the meeting was to "Motivate the exchange of experiences and results in rabbit production systems in the Americas, their technical, economic, environmental and social sustainability, and strategies for the improvement, conservation, use and characterisation of animal genetic resources" for rabbit farming. The congress opened with a lecture on the current state of rabbit farming by Juan José Pascual, president of the World Rabbit Science Association (WRSA), followed by three other invited speakers, 18 scientific communications and a round table on viral haemorrhagic disease, as well as a total of 21 posters. These scientific contributions were focused on fundamental knowledge areas (feeding, genetics, reproduction, pathology), as well as other important aspects for America such as socioeconomics, the value chain and the use of rabbit farming as a tool to fight against hunger. During the first working day, aspects of the vertical integration of rabbit production, the production and commercialisation of rabbits in Cuba, feeding costs and limitations for obtaining raw materials, concern for avoiding the total slaughter of rabbits where virus outbreaks have occurred, the political will to eradicate this disease and increase the productivity of the species, the components of the value chains and the need for a correct articulation between all the links in the chain were discussed. On the other hand, on the second working day, the debate mainly focused on aspects related to the role of rabbit farming in society, not only for the production of quality meat, but also for its gender approach, the use of existing local resources in the Latin American countries and the positive experiences of producers in the promotion of rabbit breeding. The congress closed with good attendance in the room, with a representation of students, producers, specialists, researchers and delegates from state production units and the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture (Director of the National Centre for Animal Health and President of the livestock business group).

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### CURRENT STATE OF RABBIT FARMING IN THE WORLD

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To define the current situation, we must know the framework in which rabbit farming is set. We are living in a time where the prices of raw materials and energy are rising considerably, while meat consumption is decreasing, especially of rabbit meat, and this is notably affecting the

economic sustainability of the rabbit sector. In this context, the traditional producers of rabbit meat (Europe, China, Argentina and Brazil...) are showing an ongoing drop in production, some countries where consumption is being promoted (Mexico, Peru, Colombia...) are showing slow growth but continued, and there is relatively significant growth in Africa (mainly Egypt). There are several actions that can be carried out to improve profitability and recover rabbit meat consumption in Europe: i) developing effective production integration systems (more efficient and standardised); ii) developing a differentiated rabbit breeding with added value; iii) developing attractive new

products for the new consumer (steaks, hamburgers, sausages, mixtures with other meats...); iv) enhancing the visibility of the qualities of rabbit meat (health, sustainable production...); v) promoting product penetration strategies (number of references, maintenance over time, exhibitors... in the markets); vi) exploring new markets (non-consumer European countries with alternative cuisine and open such as Denmark, Norway, Sweden...). In the rest of the world, mainly in new rabbit-producing countries, the potential actions to be carried out include: i) associating rabbit production with consumer demand; ii) relying on internal (local) consumption; iii) improving productive efficiency (imports of genetic resources, a commitment of feed manufacturers...); iv) encouraging associative efforts; v) promoting rabbit meat consumption (family breeding in backyard and campaigns in local markets); vi) support from local and national governments.

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGIES FOR THE MEXICAN RABBIT FARMING INDUSTRY FACING THE SARS-COV-2 PANDEMIC (COV19)**

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The SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic has been acknowledged as one of the most devastating pandemics of the century worldwide, leaving a strong negative impact on the agricultural sector, as it caused thousands of Mexican families to make changes in their Rabbit Production Units (RPU). This paper examines some of the problems caused both directly and indirectly by the lockdown mandate ordered by the Mexican government as a measure to avoid infectious outbreaks, as well as some of the strategies carried out by different rabbit farmers to mitigate the negative effects of the lockdown and ensure the survival of rabbit farming. Among the problems faced by rabbit farmers were water scarcity, the excessive rise in feed prices and the shortage of commercial feed, together with the low or null possibility of selling the rabbit carcass. Therefore, farmers had to carry water and even pay for water trucks to supply water to the farms, changing to the cheapest commercial brands of rabbit feed, along with the supplementation of feed with agricultural residues, including corn leaves, cabbage leaves, fruits, tree leaves, complementation of hydroponic forages and the design of grazing cages for rabbits to introduce them to the Mexican milpa system. Meanwhile, the ways of marketing rabbit products changed from selling rabbit carcass to rabbit dishes, among which the most popular were hamburgers, nuggets and typical local rabbit meat dishes. To sell their rabbit products, many farmers resorted to using social

media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. Finally, the least fortunate had to reduce the number of does in the farm, in a range of 50 to 10%, and some of them had to close their rabbit farms in order to survive. Therefore, it is concluded that each RPU has unique conditions and has to make use of all available sources in order to survive, and even the most extreme decision of closing the rabbit farm is a strategy that may be kept in a latency stage, as they could reopen when conditions for the rabbit production industry are more favourable.

### **BIOTECHNOLOGICAL PLATFORM FOR VETERINARY VACCINES: RABBIT HAEMORRHAGIC DISEASE AS AN EXAMPLE**

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Veterinary vaccines are used to protect the health of companion animals, increase food production and prevent zoonotic diseases in humans. The market availability of safe and effective animal vaccines is therefore essential to modern society. Although "classical" vaccines based on the use of inactivated strains of the causal disease or attenuated pathogens induce a strong immune response and have played a major role in successful disease control and eradication, their safety is currently questionable. On the other hand, recombinant subunit vaccines are easier to store and able to induce protective immunity without toxic side effects caused by contaminants. However, in many cases, they display deficient immunogenicity and poor cellular immune response. The candidate vaccine developed at the CIGB against genotype 1 of the virus causing rabbit haemorrhagic disease overcomes such drawbacks by the ensemble of virus-like particles based on the multimerisation of the VP60 protein, which is the main protein in the viral capsid and the main target for the immune response of infected animals.

### **RABBIT FARMING AS A SOURCE OF ANIMAL PROTEIN IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES**

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Rabbit meat is rich in protein, and not only has adequate nutritional value, but also increases health and well-being or helps reduce the risk of disease. This meat is part of the food that plays a basic role in the establishing of emotional ties and using this as a reward or punishment, satisfaction or not, of elements of balance. On the other hand, hunger affects 21% of the population in Africa, compared to 9% in Asia and 9.1% in Latin America and the Caribbean. Given this panorama, the challenge that arises is, on the one hand, the promotion of rabbit breeding to supply meat (protein) to the population and, on the other, to generate an economic activity to alleviate the poverty of the people, leaving aside the romanticism of the “pretty rabbit” as a pet popular in our countries. The premise is that it is possible to feed and fatten a rabbit with agricultural waste or using part of the vegetables planted in the backyard, without generating additional costs in their consumption. The proposal is the establishment of public policies that favour the breeding of this species, policies that are not politicised and which also provide an income to the family from the sale of surplus and by-products. In this scheme, providing activity for to the whole family, the role that the elderly can play is important.

#### **CONTRIBUTION OF ANIMAL PROTEIN TO THE DIET OF FAMILIES IN VULNERABLE CONDITIONS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROHUERTA PROGRAMME IN THE NORTH-WESTERN AREA OF MENDOZA, ARGENTINA**

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The feeding of poor families, especially in developing countries, is limited in the intake of animal protein, among other deficiencies. Their diet can be improved by incorporating rabbit meat produced by themselves on family farms. This has been demonstrated, in different emerging countries worldwide, by the results of the implementation of projects and programmes for this purpose over time. The PROHUERTA Programme, financed by the Argentinian Social Development Ministry and executed by National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA), has been implemented for 30 yr, with the aim of improving the diet of population in vulnerable situation through orchards and farms of domestic species. In this research, the amount of protein supplied to the family diet and the time required for animal care were quantified, supporting the importance of this type of production in rural and peri-urban areas in north-east Mendoza province. The methodology was based on analysis of the results of

32 surveys carried out with members of these families. In addition, qualified referents were interviewed, such as public agents from the Extension and Rural Development Area of INTA, responsible for the territorial execution of the PROHUERTA Programme. As a result, the contribution of rabbit meat was shown to be sufficiently significant for the surveyed families that consume it daily, weekly or monthly. Another outcome, regarding the implementation of this kind of public policies, is that the ProHuerta Programme works to strengthen family capacities, recovering and redefining local know-how related to technological and productive aspects, which constitutes the basis to make a contribution to food safety.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE RESEARCH AND APPLICATION OF RABBIT GENETICS IN CUBA**

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The main investigations carried out at the Institute of Animal Science (ICA) on rabbit genetics have been compiled over more than 50 yr in their interrelation with state companies specialised in rabbit production (National Rabbit Plan, Havana Rabbit Plan and Minor Livestock Company), which represented it at different times from 1965 to the present, and with the Cuban Society of Rabbit breeders (1993 to date), which represents the majority of rabbit breeders in the country. The achievements, limitations and the urgent need to coordinate the scientific entities, the specialised companies and the base producers in the Rabbit Genetic Improvement Programme with a view to supporting the National Programme for the Development of Minor Species until 2030 are evident.

#### **BIOTECHNOLOGY OF RABBIT REPRODUCTION IN CUBA**

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The aim of this conference was to describe the results of the implementation of artificial insemination (AI) reproductive biotechnology and oestrus induction in rabbits in Cuba. Studies carried out by the Research Centre for Animal Improvement of Tropical Livestock between 1990 and 2022 are reviewed. The themes of these contributions deal with the introduction of AI in the country, the use of new devices for the extraction and evaluation of ejaculates from rabbit stallions, as well

as continuity work and the creation of laboratories for this activity. Likewise, the most used oestrus induction protocols and the first results of artificial insemination in rabbits from individual producers are reported.

## **NON-CONVENTIONAL FEEDS FOR RABBIT PRODUCTION**

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Several studies indicate that, in future, the increase in human population will be associated with a high animal protein deficiency. As a valuable and viable alternative, rabbit production stands out because of its meat, with high biological value and low fat. To ensure economic viability in the rabbit sector, alternative feeds are used, which contribute to reducing diet-related costs. In the tropics, there is a wide variety of non-conventional feedstuffs available with potential for use in rabbit feed. The use of these ingredients in animal nutrition is limited by the lack of knowledge of their nutritional value. Among the main alternative feedstuffs used are forage trees and shrubs and agro-industrial waste, among others. In this sense, research has shown that the use of these feedstuffs within the recommended levels can replace conventional foods.

## **RABBIT FARMING CHARACTERISATION VIA COMMUNITY CAPITALS IN MORELOS, MEXICO**

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Peoples' development itself contains both qualitative and quantitative aspects that relate to economic capital, while also including social, cultural, and spiritual capital. Community means not only a geographical space but also a human collective with a sense of belonging. This work characterised the community of rabbit farmers through the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) in order to gain awareness of their capital, understood as the set of resources available, both tangible and intangible, and their interaction, with a view to providing a development proposal. Rabbit farming in Morelos was found to be backyard, semi-technified and semi-intense, and it will drive qualitative and quantitative changes in families involved in it. This is due to the food and family work assured through hard times, the combination with other economic activities, short-term sustainable production, and the fact that rabbit farming contributes

to farmers' permanency in their communities, as found in the research that shows that rabbit producers have low migration rates. Moreover, the capital analysis determined that social, human, constructive, natural and financial capital is fundamental to development of the activity. Therefore, activities designed to improve these types of capital must be implemented for the benefit of these rabbit farmers.

## **GENETIC AND NON-GENETIC FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF FIVE RABBIT BREEDS**

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To determine the influence of genetic and non-genetic factors on the reproductive performance of five rabbit breeds (California, Chinchilla, New Zealand, Pardo Cubano and Semigiant), 3409 reproductive records and three weighings (March, May and September) by the breeders of a genetic unit during the year 2017 were used. The traits analysed were total and live births, viability at birth and at weaning, the number of weaned and the weights at weaning of the litter and individual. In the statistical analysis, the SAS (Statistical Analysis System) statistical package and a mixed generalised linear model were used that considered the genetic effect of the race and as non-genetic the season of the year, the physiological state, the number of parturitions, the weight of the breeder in classes and breed-by-season interaction. The random effect was the breeder doe in her different parturitions. Physiological state and season of the year were the most consistent effects, influencing 71% of traits. During the rainy season, the behaviour of the reproductive traits decreased with respect to the dry season, fundamentally the viability at weaning. The females that were in the final phase of lactation and with kits presented better reproductive performance. The Semigiant and New Zealand breeds showed advantages over California and Chinchilla. The behaviour of the traits analysed is fundamentally influenced by non-genetic factors and their knowledge is of vital importance in rabbit profitability.

## **INFLUENCE OF LIVE WEIGHT OF RABBIT BREEDERS AT KINDLING ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THEIR LITTER.**

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To determine the influence of the live weight of breeders at kindling on the development of the litter in the California, Chinchilla and New Zealand breeds, the litters and their dams at kindling were weighed in the months of March, May and September 2017. The traits of litter size and weight at birth and at weaning from the reproductive information corresponding to that year were recorded to establish the relationship between the litter and the weight of the breeder at kindling. A mixed generalised linear model with fixed effects of breed, kindling month, breeder weight, and breed \* month and breed \* breeder weight interactions was used. The effect of breed influenced litter size at birth and the month of kindling affected the four traits analysed as well as the interaction with breed, except for size at birth. For the effect of breed and month on the size at birth, New Zealand had better results, followed by California and Chinchilla, and the most numerous were born in March and September. In the breed \* kindling month interaction, New Zealand and California presented the heaviest litters in March and Chinchilla in May. For litter size at weaning, only the Chinchilla differed, with the best sizes in March. In weight at weaning, California and Chinchilla presented similar behaviour. We can conclude that the effect of breed and kindling month notably affect the development of rabbit litters.

#### RABBIT SEMEN CRYOPRESERVATION USING TRILADYL® VS. EXPERIMENTAL DILUENT ADDED WITH ANTIOXIDANT PLANT EXTRACTS

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The cryopreservation process causes severe damage to male gametes, among other things, by the release of reactive oxygen species (ROS), making it necessary to improve the seminal freezing process with antioxidant agents of low cellular toxicity to reduce the damage caused by ROS. The aim of the present study was to evaluate the *in vitro* effect of diluents enriched by plant extracts with antioxidant properties for rabbit semen cryopreservation. Ten California breed males of reproductive age were used. For the preparation of aqueous extracts, two plants with antioxidant properties were used: epazote (*Chenopodium ambrosioides*; Ep) and rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*; Ro) at concentrations of 5%, 10% and 15% to enrich two diluents, one commercially prepared with Triladyl® and the other prepared in the laboratory based on Tris-glucose-citric acid (TGA). Seminal evaluation was performed on fresh semen and after thawing; the diluents that showed better post-thawing results in the motility percentage were Triladyl® with Ro10 (48.222±6.399) and Triladyl®

(47±9.055); in the viability percentage, the diluents that showed better results were Triladyl® (55.4±4.52) and Triladyl® with Ep15 (51±4.12); the diluents that showed better membrane response were Triladyl® with Ro10 (33.4±4.52) and Triladyl® with Ep15 (51±4.12).: while the diluents that presented the best membrane response were Triladyl® added with Ro10 (33.778±8.686), followed by Triladyl® (27.333±3.082); no significant statistical difference was found in the morpho-anomalies.

#### REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES TO INCREASE RABBIT PRODUCTION

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The aim of the work was to evaluate the efficiency of reproductive technologies to increase rabbit production. For the study, a total of 68 females were used, divided into two groups: control group and artificial insemination group, consisting of 31 and 37 females, respectively. To achieve receptivity, a 25 IU intramuscular (IM) dose of equine chorionic gonadotropin (eCG) was applied to both groups. Once the external manifestation of oestrus was evaluated, an inseminating dose of 0.5 mL of semen previously evaluated, according to its sperm quality, was applied to the group of females to be inseminated. After AI, ovulation was induced with gonadorelin intramuscularly (IM). For the statistical analysis, the statistical package SAS (Statistical Analysis System) version 9.3 of 2013 and a mixed generalised linear model were used using the PROC GLIMMIX, where the treatment (control and inseminated) was considered as a fixed effect for fertility traits and pups per birth. Fertility of inseminated females did not differ from that of females in natural mating ( $P=0.9413$ ). However, for pups per parturition, the inseminated females obtained 1.4 more pups than the control group ( $P=0.0412$ ). It is concluded that artificial insemination can be an alternative in rabbit reproduction.

#### DIGESTIBILITY IN RABBITS FED TRITICALE-BASED DIETS SUPPLEMENTED WITH XYLANASE

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The objective was to evaluate the apparent total tract digestibility (ATTD) of triticale-based diets supplemented with xylanase in growing-finishing rabbits. Forty rabbits with an average initial weight of  $804 \pm 105$  g, New Zealand  $\times$  California breed, 35 d old, were used, distributed in a completely randomised design. The treatments (T) were: T1, control diet: based on alfalfa hay (40%), triticale (14%), soybean meal (10.5%), wheat bran (14%), oat hay (16%), vegetable oil (2.7%) and a premix of vitamins and minerals. Treatments 2, 3 and 4 were similar to T1, with the inclusion of different xylanase enzyme levels (4000, 8000 and 12000 XU/kg, respectively). The rabbits were fed *ad libitum* and faecal excretion was collected on the days 7, 14, 21, 28 and 35 of the experiment. Samples of food and faeces were collected and then stored at  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$  for subsequent chemical analyses. Data were processed with an analysis of variance using the SAS GLM procedure (2002) and treatment means were compared with Tukey's test ( $P \leq 0.05$ ). The experimental diet with 8000 XU/g of xylanase enzyme provided the best crude protein and dry matter ATTD values at day 14 and 28 of the experiment.

#### EFFECTS OF MAGUEY, NOPAL AND BURCLOVER ON PRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE AND CARCASS TRAITS IN FATTENING RABBITS

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In rabbit farming, feed implies the highest production cost, it is necessary to look for ingredients alternatives, such as burclover, a legume considered an invasive weed, nopal, which has become an auxiliary forage for arid and semi-arid zones and maguey, with high fibre and pectin content. For this reason, the aim of this research was to evaluate the effect of maguey, nopal and burclover on the productive parameters and carcass quality of rabbits, in order to propose them as alternative ingredients. Forty-eight rabbits at 42 d of age were used, distributed completely at random in two treatments (control, 5% maguey - 5% nopal - 5% burclover), with six replicates. The diets offered during 30 d were isoproteic, isoenergetic and isofibrous, and the productive parameters and carcass traits were obtained. The inclusion of maguey, nopal and burclover increased ( $P < 0.05$ ) feed intake, final and total cattle weight, improved feed conversion, decreased mortality, increased animal and carcass length, carcass circumference, renal fat, scapular fat, weight of the front, middle part, legs, quantity of meat and bone in legs. It can be concluded that, by incorporating maguey, nopal and burclover in the diet, mortality is reduced, and productive

parameters and carcass traits of fattening rabbits are improved, which indicates that its use is feasible.

#### EFFECT OF MAGUEY AND NOPAL ON PRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE AND CARCASS TRAITS OF FATTENING RABBITS

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Rabbit farming is an attractive activity for producers, as rabbits have a high capacity for forage utilisation, meat aptitude, high prolificity and growing efficiency. However, one problem is the cost of feed, which is why alternatives are being sought, such as maguey leaves discarded from pulque production, or the cladodes of the forage cactus, available ingredients with considerable nutritional value. The objective of this research was to evaluate the effect of the inclusion of maguey pulque residue (*Agave salmiana*) and nopal in the feed of fattening rabbits on productive performance and carcass quality, in order to propose them as alternative ingredients. Eighty rabbits of 35 d of age were used, randomly assigned to four treatments (control, maguey, nopal, maguey-nopal). Diets were isoproteic, isoenergetic and isofibrous. Feed consumption and weight gain were measured. After 28 d of fattening, the animals were slaughtered for carcass traits analysis. The results indicate differences ( $P < 0.05$ ) for feed consumption and weight gain, improving feed conversion, without affecting carcass quality. It was concluded that using maguey and nopal to feed fattening rabbits improved feed conversion without carcass traits.

#### EFFECT OF *TENEBRIO MOLITOR* Y *TITHONIA TUBAEFORMIS* FORMULA ON PRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE OF EARLY WEANED RABBITS

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Early weaning can strengthen the development of the rabbit by ingesting solid food, allowing greater production. Larvae of insects such as *Tenebrio molitor* could be used, as they are a source of high-quality protein and fat, as well as plants, such as *Tithonia tubaeformis*, for their biological activity that can improve the health of the rabbit. For this reason, the objective of this research was to evaluate the effect of a formula containing *Tenebrio molitor* and



*Tithonia tubaeformis* on productive parameters of early weaned rabbits. An infusion was prepared with 10 g of *T. tubaeformis*, 50 g of *T. molitor* and 20 g of honey in 1 L of water, for treatments 2 and 3. Sixty rabbits of 18 d of age were used, distributed completely randomised in three treatments (T1: water, T2: unground infusion, T3 ground infusion). For 15 d, they were fed a diet with 18% crude protein, 2.7 Mcal Kg<sup>-1</sup> DM of digestible energy and 25% neutral detergent fibre. The weight of food and drink was recorded. The kits that consumed the greatest amount of food at 9 d consumed the infusion of *T. tubaeformis* and *T. molitor* without grinding; drink consumption increased with T2 at 13 d. The total weight gained of the rabbits that consumed T2 from day 10 to 15 was greater. Therefore, offering unground *T. molitor* and *T. tubaeformis* infusion prevents the mortality of early weaned rabbits without modifying productive performance parameters.

#### **EFFECT OF (*CHENOPODIUM AMBROSIODES*) HYDROLATE ON PRODUCTION PARAMETERS AND CARCASS QUALITY OF RABBITS**

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Epazote contains metabolites such as ascaridole, with antiparasitic, antifungal and antibacterial effects. The hydrolate is an aqueous product that contains chemical compounds, which can be useful to maintain animal health, obtained as waste from hydrodistillation. The aim of this research was to evaluate the effect of epazote hydrolate in rabbit feed on productive parameters and carcass quality, in order to propose it as an additive. Thirty rabbits of 35 d of age were used, randomly assigned to two treatments (with and without hydrolate) for 28 d. Productive parameters and carcass quality were measured. The inclusion of epazote hydrolate improved daily weight gain in week 2 ( $P < 0.05$ ), as well as the weight of the legs and the amount of meat in them, and decreased mortality by 50% ( $P < 0.05$ ). This indicates that epazote hydrolate can be included in rabbit feed, since it decreases mortality, improves productive parameters and carcass quality.

#### **PRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF RABBITS FED ON FEEDS WITH COCONUT FLOUR IN THE DIET**

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Several authors refer to the nutritional quality of coconut flour and its impact on animal feed. With the aim of evaluating the productive behaviour in fattening rabbits fed with increasing levels of this by-product, 120 rabbits were used in a completely randomised design. The treatments consisted of diets with levels of 0, 10, 20, 30 and 40% coconut flour inclusion. The experimental diets were isoenergetic and isoprotein formulated, based on meeting the nutritional requirements of the animals. The palatability and chemical composition of the diets promoted variations in dry matter and nutrients intake. The average daily gains were higher than 20 g, which is considered adequate for tropical regions; the diets with 10 and 20% inclusions originated the highest average weight gains among the diets with coconut flour inclusions. The conversion index was better in the diets with 0 and 10% of coconut flour. The best productive response of the animals was achieved with the 10 and 20% diets.

#### **USE OF FRESH *MORINGA OLEIFERA* FORAGE IN FATTENING RABBITS AT THE EL PITIRRE DEMONSTRATION FARM**

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To determine the potential use of forage protein plants in rabbit feeding, an observational test was designed and carried out with the supply of fresh moringa (*Moringa oleifera*) forage in growing-fattening rabbits, based on the availability of this protein source at the El Pitirre demonstration farm. Twenty animals at 35 d of age were used, distributed in 4 cages at a rate of 5 animals each. Two treatments were used; a control that consumed CENPALAB commercial feed according to the consumption standard that is usually supplied to the animals (54 g of concentrate/animal d) and a practical one where, in addition to the commercial feed, moringa forage was offered (54 g of concentrate/animal d+160 g of fodder on a wet basis/animal d). The animals were weighed by cage at the beginning of the test and at the end, with 25 d in fattening to study the increase in weight. The animals that consumed moringa fodder+concentrate did not have diarrhoea during the test and showed better weights, with gains greater than 25 g/d, while in the control cages the weights at the end of the test barely exceeded 1000 g. The behaviour of the animals that consumed moringa forage predicts the potential use in rabbits of this forage, which also constitutes a source of fibre necessary to complement the diets of the species, which are generally low in this nutrient.