Effect of pellet and mash feeding on the performance of growing rabbit

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Abstract

The present study was undertaken to know the effect of pellet and mash feeding on nutrient digestibility, growth performance and carcass weight of growing rabbits. For this purpose fifteen crossbred New-Zealand white rabbit were selected for conducting the experiment. The Average ages of these experimental rabbits were 1.5 to 2.0 months. All the rabbits were housed in Quonset style cages. Animals were distributed to mash (T₁), pellet (T₂) and mixture of pellet and mash (T₃) groups equally with five animals in each group. All the animals were supplied ad libitum green grass. The experiment shows that highest body weight was found from pelleted group. Growth rate of different dietary treatment differ significantly (p<0.05). FCR of different dietary groups did not differ significantly. Carcass weight and dressing yield of rabbits did not differ significantly, but dressing yield was highest for pelleted group. So the study reveal that, feeding of pelleted diet resulted in higher growth rate, growth velocity, dressing yield, better feed conversion efficiency compared to mash and pellet with mash.

Key words: Rabbit, pellet, productive performance

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Introduction

Rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus) is a small non-ruminant animal which may be recommended as an alternative source for meat production. Cattle rearing require more money and more space, but less money and/ or less space are involved in rabbit rearing. The domestic rabbit is considered as viable livestock species (Cheeke, 1979) and is raised for several purposes including meat and fur production, laboratory animals, for show and as pets (Cheek, 1986a). Rabbit have number of characteristics such as small body size, short generation interval (gestation length 28-32 days), high productive potential (4 or 5 litters per year with an average of 5.8 young per year), rapid growth rate and genetic diversity (Cheeke, 1986b). Ultimately rabbit is enabling to attract the attention of farmer as well as the private industry. The environments, climatic condition, religious issue, social status of Bangladesh are favorable to rabbit production and these are easy to handle and live on easily available grass. It is reared easily by village woman and children. Moreover, rabbit meat is high quality, because it is high protein content and low in fat and cholesterol (Jones, 1990, Handa et al., 1995). Rabbit is a monogastric animal but can utilize cellulose content of feed for the presence of caecum with the enzyme of cellulose. Cheeke (1986a) indicated that rabbits are primarily herbivores and can be successfully raised on diets that are low in grain and high in roughage. The ability of rabbit to convert roughage into meat efficiently will be of great help for Bangladesh where animal feed shortage is an acute problem. It has been reported that growing rabbits can be maintained satisfactorily on diets consisting of 100-200g green roughage and 40-60g concentrate mixtures preferably in the form of pellet (Ranjhan 1980) for optimum production and about 4 months are required to produce 2 kg market rabbit under subsistence condition (NRC 1991). Howilder and Rose (1992) found that pelleting increased feed conversion by 5.9% for rabbit, less feed wastage is possible in pellet feeding comparing mash feeding. So pellet feeding to rabbit may cause similar effect as poultry which is also a monogastric animal. Therefore, comparative study on pellet and mash

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feeding is necessary for obtaining new information for rabbit production. The present study was undertaken to know the effect of pellet and mash feeding on nutrient digestibility, growth performance and carcass weight of growing rabbits.

Materials and Methods

Location and Time

A total of fifteen crossbred New Zealand white rabbit about 1.5 to 2.0 months of age were selected to conduct the present study and the study was carried out at the animal nutrition field laboratory, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh. Chemical analysis of mash and pellet feed was done in the laboratory of Department of Animal Nutrition, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh. The study was done during the period of April 24 to June 26, 2003.

Experimental design and dietary treatment

Animals were randomly distributed to three treatment groups having five animals in each group. The treatment groups were Treatment-1 (T1) concentrate feed of mash form, Treatment-2 (T2) concentrate feed of pellet form and Treatment-3 (T3) concentrate feed of 50% mash form and 50% pellet form. All the animals were supplied ad libitum green grass and fresh water was made available to the rabbits at all time.

Preparation of concentrate mixture

Table 1. Composition of mash feed given to growing rabbits

| Ingredients     | Amount of fresh feed (kg) | DM content (kg) | ME content (Kcal) | ME content (Kcal)/kg | Protein content (kg) |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Maize           | 34                        | 30.39           | 101826.6          | 3350.66              | 2.88                 |
| Wheat           | 15.5                      | 13.95           | 43524             | 3120                 | 1.53                 |
| Oil             | 3.5                       | 3.50            | 31150             | 8900                 | 0                    |
| Wheat bran      | 15                        | 13.25           | 17218.5           | 1299.50              | 1.92                 |
| Til oil cake    | 11                        | 9.97            | 18935.4           | 1899.24              | 3.10                 |
| Soyabean meal   | 20.5                      | 18.39           | 38615.85          | 2099.83              | 7.36                 |
| Salt            | 0.50                      | 0.45            | -                 | -                    | -                    |
| Total nutrient  | 100                       | 89.70           | 251270.35         | 251270/89.7=2801     | 16.79                |

Amount of Nutrient: 2800 Kcal ME/kg DM, CP=19%
FCR and average daily gain

Feed conversion ratio (FCR) and average daily gain was calculated as following formula:

\[
FCR = \frac{\text{Daily DM intake (g)}}{\text{Daily weight gain (g)}}
\]

\[
\text{ADG}= \frac{(\text{Final live weight} - \text{Initial live weight})}{\text{Total days of study}}
\]

Growth velocity (GV)

The growth velocity was calculated in a given period of time (8 weeks) as follows:

\[
\text{GV}= \frac{(\text{FW}-\text{IW})}{\text{IW}}
\]

Where, FW= Final body weight, IW=Initial body weight

Measurement of carcass yield

At the end of experiment, two rabbits from each treatment were randomly selected. They were weighted and slaughtered un-fasted for the measurement of carcass yield, dressing percentage, organ weight, blood, skin, shank, head, trachea, lung, kidney, whole digestive tract and carcass weight were recorded.

Digestibility trail

Towards the end of the experiment a conventional digestibility trial was conducted for 7 days. At the end of collection period the sun dried faeces were mixed, together and then ground for chemical analysis. Feed and faeces samples were analyzed following the methods of AOAC (1984).

Table 2 Growth performances of rabbit by feeding pellet and mash

| Parameters                      | Treatments       | T1         | T2         | T3         | SED       | Significance level |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Initial body weight (g)         |                  | 665.00     | 650.00     | 680.00     | 131.65    | NS                 |
| Final body weight (g)           |                  | 1366.00    | 1650.00    | 1504.00    | 162.69    | *                  |
| Total body weight gain (g)      |                  | 701.00\(^a\) | 1000.00\(^a\) | 824.00\(^b\) | 93.65     | *                  |
| Growth rate (g/d)               |                  | 12.52\(^a\) | 17.86\(^a\) | 14.71\(^b\) | 1.67      | *                  |
| Total dry matter intake (g)     |                  | 3617.37    | 4181.75    | 4286.56    | 295.23    | NS                 |
| Daily dry matter intake (g)     |                  | 64.60      | 74.67      | 76.43      | 5.27      | NS                 |
| Growth velocity                 |                  | 1.12       | 1.76       | 1.29       | 0.35      | NS                 |
| FCR                            |                  | 5.12       | 4.22       | 5.32       | 0.46      | NS                 |

\(a, b\) Mean value with different superscripts differ significantly (p<0.05); T1 = Green grass + mash feed, T2 = Green grass + pellet feed, T3 = Green grass + 50% mash feed + 50% pellet feed

Statistical analysis

Collected data for every parameter were analyzed using MSTAT statistical programme to compute analysis of variance (ANOVA) for a completely randomized design; Duncan’s Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was done to compare the treatment means for different parameters.

Results and Discussion

Effect of pellet and mash feeding on rabbit growth

Live weight gain

The growth performances of rabbits fed \textit{ad libitum} green grass along with either pellet, mash or pellet and mash feed were presented in Table 2. The initial and final average live weights of rabbit were 665.00, 650.00, 680.00g and 1366g, 1650g, 1504g and body weight gain was 701.00, 1000.00 and 824.00g for the T1, T2 and T3 respectively. The results shown that the live weight gain on different treatment groups were significantly different (P<0.05). Howlider and Rose (1992) observed that the total meat yield as a proportion of live weight, was not altered by sex or diet form. The pellet feed caused increase in the fatness compared with the mash feed given to monogastric broiler. Rabbit is a mono gastric animal, so it may be obtained similar result.
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Growth rate

Average daily growth rate was 12.52, 17.86, 14.71g for the treatments of T1, T2 and T3 respectively (Table 2) and differed significantly (p<0.05), this was occurred may be due to supply of pelleted diet to the animal. Lindblad et al. (1955) observed an increase in rate of growth of monogastric, chicks fed pelleted rations without increased consumption of feed. The findings supported the present study. El-Kerdaway et al., (1992) found that average daily body weight gain of rabbits was 24.9, 23.4, 21.9 and 22.1g, which is differ than the present study.

Growth velocity

The growth velocity of different dietary treatment groups did not differ significantly, but the highest growth velocity was recorded 1.76g for diet T2, followed by T1 (1.12g) and T3 (1.29g) respectively.

FCR

The average FCR of among the diet were 5.21, 4.22 and 5.32 respectively and the result did not differ significantly (p>0.05) within the groups, but highest performance was found the pelleted group. Howilder and Rose (1992), Ruiz Feria and Lukefahr (1998), Bielanski et al. (1998), Sawal et al. (1995) also found that pelleting increased feed conversion.

Daily and total dry matter intake (g)

Average daily and total dry matter intake (up to 56 days) was 64.60, 74.67 and 76.43g and 3617.37, 4181.75 and 4286.56g for treatments T1, T2 and T3 respectively and the dietary treatments did not differ significantly (p>0.05). Park et al., (1983) reported that Hubbard broilers of 9 weeks of age eat more pellets than mash. Rabbit is also monogastric animal so similar result may be obtained.

Effect of pellet, mash and mixture of pellet and mash feeding on carcass weight

The average carcass weight was 887.50, 815.00 and 760.00g for treatments T1, T2 and T3 groups respectively (Table-3) and no significant differences were (p>0.05) found among the treatment groups. The dressing yield (%) was 55.52, 56.97 and 56.80 % of T1, T2 and T3 group respectively and the result showed non-significant (p>0.05).

Digestibility

The digestibility of proximate components of different diets is representing in Table-4. The results shown that digestibility of DM was highest in group T1 followed by T2 and T3 respectively and T1 significantly (p<0.05) higher than that of other groups. But no significant different were found another two groups. The CP content of different dietary treatment groups were 81.23, 84.86 and 81.08 % for T1, T2 and T3 respectively which was significantly (p<0.01) differed between both treatment groups. The CF content of among the different dietary treatment groups differed significantly (p<0.05). The EE content of diet T1 was significantly (p<0.01) higher than that of other two groups. NFE digestibility of treatments T1, T2 and T3 were 80.39, 76.96 and 70.82 % respectively which was differed significantly (p<0.01) among the treatment groups. The result agree with the result of Amber et al., (2002), Deshmukh and Pathak, (1995), Gupta et al., (1993) and Rao et al., (1987) they found similar findings of different proximate component digestibility of rabbit.

Table 3. Carcass weight and dressing yield of growing rabbit

| Parameters                              | Treatments | T1   | T2   | T3   | SED   | Level of significance |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|------|------|------|-------|-----------------------|
| Carcass weight gain (g/whole period)    |            | 887.50 | 815.00 | 760.00 | 62.57 | NS                    |
| Dressing yield (%)                      |            | 55.52  | 56.97 | 56.80 | 1.55  | NS                    |

T1 = Green grass + mash feed, T2 = Green grass + pellet feed, T3 = Green grass + 50% mash feed + 50% pellet feed.
Table 4. Digestibility of different nutrient component

| Parameters | Digestibility (%) | Treatments | Level of significance |
|------------|------------------|------------|----------------------|
|            |                  | T1        | T2        | T3        | SED |               |
| DM         | 77.09a           | 72.84b    | 70.42b    | 1.24      |     | **            |
| CP         | 81.23b           | 84.86b    | 81.08c    | 1.06      |     | **            |
| CF         | 44.85a           | 46.46b    | 37.58b    | 3.35      |     | *             |
| EE         | 88.50a           | 72.23b    | 58.87c    | 1.65      |     | **            |
| NFE        | 80.39a           | 76.96b    | 70.82c    | 1.38      |     | **            |

a,b,c, mean value with different superscripts differ significantly (p<0.05) or (p<0.001).

**Conclusion**

From the above discussion it may be concluded that feeding of pelleted diet resulted in higher growth rate, growth velocity, dressing yield, nutrient digestibility, and better feed conversion efficiency in growing rabbits compared to those of feeding mash or mixture of mash and pellet diet. Therefore, feeding of pelleted diet may be recommended.

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