

Original Research Article

Effect of Feeding Raw kapok (*Ceiba pentandra*) seed meal on the Growth Performance, Nutrient digestibility, carcass and organ weights of Weaner Rabbits

ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to evaluate the effects of feeding raw kapok seed meal on growth performance, nutrient digestibility, carcass characteristics of weaner rabbit. Thirty (30) weaner rabbits were used for the study. Five diets were compounded using raw kapok seed meal (RKSM) at 0, 5, 10, 15 and 20% inclusion levels. The rabbits were weighed and randomly assigned to the five dietary treatments replicated three times with two rabbits per replicate in a completely randomized design. The proximate composition of kapok seed meal showed it contains 89.96% dry matter, 17.45% crude fibre, 22.63%, crude protein, 9% ether extracts, 6.54%, Ash and 55.51% Nitrogen Free Extract. The seed meal also contains tannin (2.58%), Alkaloid (8.32), phenol (23.14%), flavonoid (5.63%), saponin (3.22%) trypsin inhibitors (28.26%), haemagglutinin (12.12%) and oxalate (2.14%). The result of growth performance and nutrient digestibility decreased significantly ($P < 0.01$) as the dietary levels of raw kapok seed meal increases. Similarly carcass and internal organ weights were significantly influenced by the dietary levels of RKSM. The relative weights of liver, lungs and kidney significantly ($P < 0.01$) increased beyond 10% RKSM inclusion in the diet. It was concluded that RKSM can be fed to weaner rabbit up to 10% inclusion levels without any adverse effect on the rabbit performance.

Keywords: weaner rabbit, Performance, nutrient digestibility, carcass characteristics, kapok seed,

1. Introduction

Over the years conventional protein and energy sources such as groundnut cake and soybean meal have remained the major protein source in the diets of non-ruminant animals [1]. The ingredients are highly consumed by human beings and industries as such; there is tacit competition between humans and livestock as well as industries for these scarce commodities [1,2]. Hence there prices are becoming exorbitant. There is the need therefore to search for possible alternative protein and energy sources which are cheap, readily available and has comparable nutritive quality to the conventional protein and energy sources. One of such under exploited non-conventional feedstuff is kapok seed.

Kapok is a tropical tree of the order *Malvales* and the family *Malvaceae* native to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Northern South America and to tropical West Africa. The tree is also known as the Java cotton, Hara kapok, Silk cotton or *Ceiba* [3]. It is the largest African forest tree

38 and severally known among some Nigerian ethnic groups as *Rimi* (Hausa), *Bamtami* (Fulani),
 39 *Arabaogungun*(Yoruba) and *Akpi* (Igbo) [4]. In Nigeria, the leaves are cooked in form of slurry sauce
 40 comparable to Okra. The young leaves or the shoots are normally used for soup (sausage). A powder
 41 prepared from dried leaves is used to **prepared** sauce during the dry season [3].

42 The proximate composition of kapok seeds on dry matter basis have been reported to contain
 43 20-35% crude protein (CP), 20-26% crude fibre (CF), 5-9% ether extracts (EE), 5-7% total ash and 29
 44 -31% Nitrogen free extracts (NFE) [5,6]. The seed has high potential as protein and energy sources
 45 in non- ruminant feed. Studies conducted by **ref** 7,8 and 9 on the effects of feeding unprocessed
 46 kapok seed meal to broiler chicken resulted to depressed **in** appetite, loss of weight, growth
 47 depression and discoloration of the egg yolk in layers. However, there **isscanty** information on the
 48 utilization of raw kapok seed meal in rabbits' diet. The study was therefore carried out to determine
 49 effects of raw kapok seed on the growth performance of weaner rabbits.

50 **2. Material and methods**

51 **2.1 Study area:**

52 The study was conducted at the Rabbit unit of Teaching and Research Farm of Federal University
 53 Wukari, Taraba State. Wukari is located at longitude 9⁰47'0"E and latitude 7⁰51'0" N longitude 9047'
 54 0"E. The vegetation of the area is predominantly characteristics of savannah zone and with
 55 major climatic seasons of wet or rainy seasons, which starts in March or April, and ends in
 56 October and the dry season, and the dry season which starts in November and ends in March or
 57 April [10].

58 **2.2 Source and processing of kapok seeds meal**

59 The seeds were procured from local market in Shelleng, Adamawa State Nigeria. Stones and dirt
 60 were picked and ground using 2mm sieve hammer mill to form raw Kapok seed meal (RKSM).

61 **2.3 Experimental diets**

62 Five dietary treatments were compounded using raw kapok seed meal (RKSM). Diet 1 served as
 63 control, while diets 2, 3, 4 and 5 contain RKSM at 5.00, 10.00, 15.00 and 20.00 % inclusion levels
 64 respectively (Table 1).

65 Table 1 Ingredient composition of experimental diets

Ingredient	Inclusion levels of raw kapok seed meal (%)				
	0	5	10	15	20
Maize	49.49	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00
Soybean meal	16.00	14.00	10.34	9.12	6.15
Raw Kapok seed meal	0.00	5.00	10.00	15.00	20.00
Fishmeal	3.21	3.21	3.21	3.21	3.21
Maize Offal	20.00	16.49	15.15	11.37	9.34
Wheat offal	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Methionine	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
Lysine	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
Salt	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30

Premix*	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Total	100.00	100	100	100	100
Determined analysis (%)					
Dry matter	89.45	89.39	89.40	89.42	89.41
Crude protein	17.22	17.10	17.10	17.11	17.10
Crude fibre	5.34	5.30	5.33	5.31	5.32
Ether extracts	4.38	4.32	4.36	4.35	4.33
Ash	6.23	6.24	6.22	6.23	6.24
NFE	66.83	67.04	66.99	67.00	67.01
ME/Kcal/kg	2802.54	2800.01	2801.56	2802.89	2801.78

66 Mineral/ Vitamin Premix manufactured by Animal care LTD contained the following: Vitamin A
67 1,800IU, Vitamin D 250IU, Vitamin E 8,000IU, Vitamin K 750mg, B1 750mg, B2 1000 mg, B6 800mg,
68 B12 25mg Folic 300mg, Niacin 5000mg, Pantothenate 3000mg, Biotin 25mg, Choline 160g,
69 Thyroxine 300mg, Copper 0.4g, Iron 4g, Manganese 5.5g, Iodine 0.2g, Zinc 5g, Cobalt 0.15g,
70 Selenium 0.15g

71

72 **2.4 Experimental design and animal management**

73 Thirty (30) weaner rabbits with an average weight of 503±0.10 were procured from National
74 Veterinary Research Institute Vom, Plateau State. The rabbits were divided into five groups of six
75 animals per group. Each rabbit was housed in a hutch measuring 100 × 120×70cm and raised 100cm
76 from the ground in a three-tier hutch system. Hutches were provided with feeders and drinkers.
77 **Animals were** dewormed using Piperazine® before the commencement of the experiment.

78

79 **2.5 Data collection**

80 **2.5.1 Growth performance**

81 Data collected included initial body weight, weekly body weight, **final** body weight, daily feed intake,
82 and feed conversion ratio. The rabbits were weighed at the beginning of the experiment to obtain their
83 initial body weights and then weekly, thereafter. Daily feed intake was determined by subtracting the
84 weight of left over feed from the weight of the feed fed the previous day. Feed intake and weight gain
85 recorded were used to calculate feed conversion ratio **as a ratio**

86 **2.5.2 Nutrient digestibility study**

87 The nutrient digestibility study was carried out at the end of the 7th week of the experiment. Three
88 rabbits per replicate were selected randomly and transferred to metabolic cages. Two days adaptation
89 period was observed, then five days of faecal collection. The faeces were sun dried, bulked and
90 representative samples taken for chemical analysis as described by [11].

91 **2.5.3 Carcass and organ weight s evaluation**

92 At 56th day, three rabbits per treatment (one per replicate) were randomly selected, starved overnight
93 to clear the gut, while water was offered. **The following** morning they were weighed to determine their
94 live weight then slaughtered, skinned, eviscerated and dressed. Internal organs were carefully

95 removed, weighed and expressed as percentage of the live weight. Dressing percent was determined

96 as $\frac{\text{Dressed weight}}{\text{Live weight}} \times 100$

97 **2.6 Chemical analysis**

98 The proximate composition of raw kapok seed meal, experimental diets and faecal samples were
99 determined for CP, CF, EE ash and NFE using [11] methods. Total oxalate was determined according
100 to [12] procedure. Phytate was determined using the method described by [13]. Saponin was
101 determined using the method of [14] as modified by [15]. While tannin was determined using the
102 method of [16]. Phenol, haemagglutinin, flavonoid were determined using the method of [11].

103 **2.7 Statistical analysis**

104 All data obtained during the experiment were analysed according to the ANOVA model, using the
105 ONEWAY procedure of [17]. Where significant difference exist. Duncan's Multiple range test was
106 used to separate means.

107 **3. Results and discussion**

108 **3.1 Proximate composition and anti-nutrients of raw kapok seed meal**

109 The proximate composition and anti-nutrients of raw kapok seed meal is shown in Table 2. The high
110 dry matter (89.96%) content of the raw kapok seeds is an indication that they can be stored for a long
111 time and less prone to microbial attack during storage [18 and 19]. Ether extracts (10.05%) is lower
112 than 34% reported by [18] and 21-29 % reported by [20] The crude protein content recorded is
113 however lower than 36.70% reported by [19] but similar to 23-30% reported by [18]. The observed
114 variations in proximate composition could be attributed to climatic conditions, edaphic factors as well
115 as methods of processing and laboratory analysis [21].

116 The tannin content (2.58%) of raw kapok seed observed is higher than 0.34% in African oil bean
117 seed reported by [22], 0.94g reported for winged bean [23], 0.42 % in raw lablab seed by [24] and
118 1.41% found in mucuna [25]. The value of saponin recorded in the present study is higher than 1.1%
119 observed in mucuna seed [25] and also higher than 0.23-0.57mg reported by [26] and 0.96-1.33% for
120 raw lablab. The high concentration of tannins implies possibilities of poor protein digestibility caused
121 by formation of protein tannin complexes which irreversibly bind digestive enzymes, thus inhibiting the
122 activities of the enzymes making them unavailable for breaking down proteins and other nutrients [27
123 and 28].

124 Saponin in seeds imposes an astringent taste that affects feed palatability, reduce feed intake,
125 utilization of protein and consequently body growth [29]. The raw kapok seed also contain trypsin
126 inhibitor similar to 28.96mg obtained by [24] for raw lablab seed. The haemagglutinin value recorded in
127 this study is lower than the range of 41.37-53.64HU/mg reported by [30] for raw lablab seed but high
128 higher than 4.0HU/mgN for winged bean [23] and 8.0 HU/mgN for *M. pruriens* seed flour [31]. The
129 binding of hemagglutinins to intestinal membrane of animals is believed to impair the normal
130 absorption of dietary nutrients when feed stuffs containing these factors are consumed. Oxalate
131 content is higher than 1.95% found in raw mucuna seed [25]. Ref [32] reported that high concentration
132 of oxalates bind calcium present in feed thereby rendering calcium unavailable for normal

133 physiological and biochemical roles. The concentration of **phytateis** higher than 1.56% reported for
 134 mucuna by [25] and the range of 1.25 -2.04% reported for raw lablab seed by Shaabu, (2015). High
 135 phytate contents have been reported to retard growth, cause abnormalities in the intestinal histology,
 136 reduce the bioavailability of dietary phosphorus, inhibit dietary proteins and activity of trypsin and
 137 pepsin and reduces the solubility of starch [33 and 34].

138

139 **Table 2 proximate and anti- nutrients composition of raw kapok seed meal**

Nutrients	Composition (%)
Dry matter	89.51
Crude protein	22.59
Crude fibre	17.45
Ether extracts	10.05
Ash	6.53
Nitrogen free extracts	43.38
ME Kcal/kg	3180
<i>Anti- nutrients composition</i>	
Phenol	23.14
Alkaloid	8.32
Flavonoid	56.24
Tannin	2.58
Saponin	3.35
Phytate	3.22
Trypsin inhibitors	28.36
Hemagglutinin	12.25
Oxalate	2.14

140

141 **3.2 Growth performance of weaner rabbits fed raw kapok seed meal (RKSM)**

142 The growth performance of weaner rabbits fed RKSM is presented in Table 3. The result
 143 **showedsignificant** ($p < 0.01$) difference across inclusion levels. The final body weight, total feed intake
 144 and total weight gain of the rabbits decreased as the levels of RKSM increased in the diets. The result
 145 is in consonant with the observations of [35;36] on broiler **chickenwhen** they fed raw jack bean and
 146 raw tallow seed meals respectively. The decrease in final body weight, total feed intake and total
 147 weight gain could be attributed to inherent anti-nutrients in the raw kapok seed meal which probably
 148 reached a threshold level beyond the tolerance levels of the rabbits. Several studies have attributed
 149 impaired feed utilization, depressed growth, loss of appetite and pancreatic hypertrophy in the
 150 experimental animals to anti-nutritional factors [25, 36,37,38,39 and 40]. Rabbits on 0%, 5% and 10%
 151 inclusion levels had superior ($p < 0.05$) feed conversion ratio suggesting there was better absorption
 152 and utilization of nutrients by the rabbits.

153 **Table 3 Growth performance of weaner rabbits fed raw kapok seed meal**

Parameters	Inclusion levels of raw kapok seed meal (%)					SEM
	0	5	10	15	20	
Initial body weight (g)	503.66	503.33	503.61	503.00	504.01	12.26 ^{ns}
Final body weight (g)	1831.22 ^a	1750.30 ^{ab}	1660.36 ^b	933.67 ^c	905.91 ^c	41.01 ^{**}
Total weight gain (g)	1327.56 ^a	1246.97 ^{ab}	1156.75 ^b	430.67 ^c	401.90 ^c	40.19 ^{**}
Average weight gain (g)	23.70 ^a	22.26 ^a	20.65 ^b	7.69 ^c	7.17 ^c	0.71 ^{**}
Total feed intake (g)	2527.92 ^a	2385.39 ^a	2368.37 ^a	1093.73 ^c	1046.41 ^c	63.75 ^{**}
Average daily feed intake (g)	45.14 ^a	42.59 ^a	42.29 ^a	19.53 ^c	18.68 ^c	1.13 ^{**}
Feed conversion ratio	1.90 ^b	1.91 ^b	2.04 ^b	2.53 ^a	2.60 ^a	0.16 ^{**}

154 Means in the same row bearing different superscripts differ significantly ($P < 0.01$), **=Significantly
 155 different ($P < 0.01$), Ns = not significant different ($P > 0.01$), SEM = Standard error mean

156 3.3 Nutrient digestibility of weaner rabbits fed raw kapok seed meal

157 Table 4 showed the nutrient digestibility of weaner rabbits fed RKSM. There was significant ($P < 0.01$)
 158 decrease in the digestibility of nutrients with increasing levels of RKSM in the diets. Rabbits fed 0%
 159 and 5% and 10% diets had similar nutrient digestibility which implied that they could tolerate up to
 160 10% RKSM level of inclusion. The reduction in nutrient digestibility beyond 10% is ascribed to the
 161 presence of the anti-nutritional factors in RKSM. Ref[41] reported that anti-nutritional factors (ANFs)
 162 interfere with metabolic process such that growth and bioavailability of nutrients are negatively
 163 influenced.

164 **Table 4: Nutrient digestibility of weaner rabbits fed raw kapok seed meal**

Parameters	Inclusion levels of raw kapok seed meal (%)					SEM
	0	5	10	15	20	
Dry matter	88.89 ^a	85.45 ^a	71.78 ^b	60.90 ^b	60.45 ^b	0.77 ^{**}
Crude Protein	84.84 ^a	80.92 ^a	79.99 ^a	61.34 ^b	60.45 ^b	0.40 ^{**}
Ether Extracts	74.47 ^a	72.32 ^a	71.10 ^a	58.91 ^c	57.27 ^c	0.64 ^{**}
Crude fibre	76.09 ^a	73.20 ^a	72.48 ^a	60.16 ^b	58.14 ^c	1.21 ^{**}
Ash	84.17 ^a	80.18 ^a	79.32 ^a	59.56 ^b	56.15 ^b	1.25 ^{**}
Nitrogen free extracts	74.18 ^a	73.89 ^b	70.57 ^a	61.54 ^b	58.97 ^c	0.43 ^{**}

165 Means in the same row bearing different superscripts differ significantly ($P < 0.01$), **=significantly
 166 different ($P < 0.01$), SEM = Standard error mean

167 3.4 Carcass yield, cut-up parts and internal organs of broiler chickens

168 Live weights and dressing percent were significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) in rabbits fed T1, T2 and T3
 169 diets. Live weight and dressing percent were lower than the range of 1375.00 - 1650.00g and 73.01-
 170 76.20% reported by [42 and 43] respectively for tropical rabbits. The poor dressing percent observed in
 171 rabbits fed T4 and T5 diets might be due to reduction in feed intake and impaired nutrient
 172 utilization attributed by the high ANFs in the raw kapok seeds. The development of carcass trait,
 173 organs and muscular growth in animals depend on nutrition among other factors [44]. The weight of
 174 the heart of rabbits fed T1, T2 and T3 diets were significantly lower ($P < 0.05$) compared with those of

175 T4 and T5. The relative higher weights of liver and kidney of rabbits on T4 and T5 **dietsimplifies**
 176 **thatinclusion** of RKSM up to 20% in the rabbit diet **illicittoxic** response as liver and kidney which are
 177 the major organs of detoxification **has undergo** hypertrophy [45]
 178 **Table 5 Carcass yield and internal organs of weaner rabbits fed raw kapok seed meal**

Parameters	Dietary treatments					SEM
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	
Live weight (g)	1416.89 ^a	1430.23 ^a	1267.32 ^{ab}	1100.17 ^b	900.00 ^c	64.76 ^{**}
Pelt weight (g)	122.33 ^{abc}	116.14 ^c	124.12 ^{ab}	119.26 ^{bc}	126.78 ^a	2.12 ^{**}
Head weight (g)	119.26 ^{ab}	114.88 ^{ab}	109.52 ^b	126.26 ^{ab}	131.68 ^a	5.38 ^{**}
dressed weight (g)	882.74 ^a	782.66 ^b	740.67 ^b	440.19 ^c	431.88 ^c	21.46 ^{**}
Dressing (%)	63.03 ^a	58.47 ^a	54.74 ^a	40.01 ^c	47.98 ^c	0.52 ^{**}
S I length (cm)	118.58 ^c	125.56 ^c	160.11 ^b	169.57 ^b	209.40 ^a	8.79 ^{**}
S I weight (g)	9.02	9.54	9.43	9.34	10.15	0.65 ^{ns}
L I length (cm)	102.69 ^b	105.87 ^b	104.73 ^b	108.76 ^b	115.30 ^a	2.69 ^{**}
L I weight (g)	17.75	19.90	23.76	26.76	26.24	2.05 ^{ns}
Caecal length (cm)	17.33	17.31	17.72	19.41	20.16	1.73 ^{ns}
Caecal weight (g)	83.75	104.83	107.33	109.72	115.98	0.83 ^{ns}
Internal organs % live weight						
Liver	2.52 ^b	2.92 ^b	2.31 ^b	5.86 ^a	6.56 ^a	0.15 ^{ns}
Heart	0.32	0.27	0.26	0.29	0.35	0.11 ^{ns}
Lungs	0.67 ^c	0.72 ^c	0.99 ^c	1.19 ^{ab}	1.39 ^a	0.10 ^{**}
Kidney	0.67 ^c	0.67 ^c	0.95 ^b	1.12 ^a	1.22 ^a	0.14 ^{**}

179 Means in the same row bearing different superscripts differ significantly (P<0.01), **=significantly
 180 different (P<0.01), Ns = not significant different (P>0.01), SEM = Standard error mean

181

182 **Conclusion**

183 The study showed that raw kapok seed meal has rich nutrients composition and **ant- nutritional**
 184 factors. The raw seed meals can be fed to weaner rabbit up to 10% inclusion levels in the diet without
 185 any adverse effect on the rabbit performance

186

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