*J. Agric. Sci. Mansoura Univ., 32 (5): 3371 - 3380, 2007*

# EARLY WEANED RABBITS AS AFFECTED BY DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PROTEIN

**Hemid, A. A.**

**Department of Poultry Production, Faculty of Agriculture, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt.**

## ABSTRACT

The performance of early weaned rabbits (at 16 days of age) fed on isoenergetic and isofiberotic diets with different levels of crude protein (20%, 18% and 16% respectively) were evaluated. A total of 60 (20/group) early weaned rabbits, 16 days old at the beginning of the experiment, were used for evaluating the growth performance, carcass characteristics at 23 and 30 days of age and apparent nutrient digestibility respectively. Rabbits fed on diets containing 20, 18 or 16% crude protein gained (from 16 to 30 days of age) an average of 422.4, 323.8 and 308.2 gm respectively. Corresponding feed conversion ratio was 1.10, 1.35, and 1.34. Dressing percentage for early weaned rabbit showed significant differences at 23 and 30 days of age. Rabbits fed 20% crude protein were significantly higher than the other two groups. Rabbits fed high level of protein (20%) showed the best nutrient digestibility for crude protein and ether extract. These results suggest that the starter diet with 20% crude protein can be better used by early weaned rabbits (16 days of age).

**Keywords:** Early weaned rabbits, crude protein, performance, carcass characteristics, digestibility coefficient.