



Jackie Mutesi feeds the rabbit on black jack weed.

# Her hobby turned into a rabbit farm

A friend gave Jackie Mutesi two rabbits, setting her on a farming journey, writes EDGAR R. BATTE

Every morning Jackie Mutesi had to take the last step out of her house, her heart ached as she heard her children cry.

She was a new mother and the children needed her attention.

This left her perplexed, unsure what she could do in order to earn a source of livelihood without her family suffering from her absence.

At the time, she had a job at one of the corporate companies.

### Olive branch

One day a friend gave her two pets. They were rabbits. Her children were excited by the small, playful mammals. Her mind started opening up to ideas.

"Someone gave me two rabbits in 2005. One was male and the other female. At one point, the female got pregnant. It gave birth to six kittens. With the increased number, I had to build a cage because they used to run in the compound and sleep in the kitchen," she explains.

One month down the road, the doe gave birth to another nine and in another month, another four.

She knew it was time to professionalise the hobby.

### Turning point

She called in a professional in the agriculture sector, Sharon Agasha. She had expertise knowledge about rabbit rearing after extensively

reading online about rabbit rearing. The urgency to call in Agasha was after putting the rabbits in the cages she had built.

She was clueless about feeding, treatment and did not know what to do with them. She turned to Google for some information.

The information was good but she needed training to concretise on the practicals of rearing the rabbits.

### Training

She recalls meeting one Mark, who is into rabbit rearing. He had organised a rabbit training session.

She recounts, "The session had

**350,000**

AMOUNT OF MONEY MUTESI SPENT ON CONSTRUCTING THE RABBIT CAGES

people coming from Kenya and Tanzania. I learnt about feeding, cleanliness and more. Good enough, I had not lost any of my rabbits. When I went back home, I put up eight cages. The first cage cost me around Shs350,000. It was made out

of wood and a small iron sheet. This was to shield the rabbits from the rain and sunshine."

By then, she had not learnt about breeding and how to get quality rabbits because the doe was producing and that is all she



### MARKETING

If you are to rear rabbits, Mutesi recommends that you look for market for the rabbit meat in time.

The advantage is there are people willing to buy such meat since it is white and therefore a healthier option.

One of the people she sells the rabbit meat to is Abraham Barungi who runs Bbit Cuts, a company that buys rabbit meat and processes it into different products.

Mutesi sells each rabbit at Shs40,000. She supplies several

restaurants in Kampala and on average she makes Shs500,000 per month from sales of rabbits for meat alone.

She also harvests urine which is sold as organic fertiliser to farmers. The urine rakes in Shs200,000 per month.

Mutesi recalls she started looking out for rabbit farmers with whom she opened up a forum.

She thought about training the youth on rabbit rearing as one of the objectives for the forum.

Indeed as she started interacting with different groups of rabbit farmers, youth were keen to learn from farmers and enthusiasts like her who had done some research about rabbit farming.

### INVESTMENT

"When I was starting out, I invested Shs60,000. If you have space, this is the amount you need. It is very good to get young kittens because when you feed them you can get what you want," she recalls.

### ADVICE

"You have to know the type of rabbits you want. There are local skinny rabbits, however much feed you give them, they are not going to increase in size. If you are going for meat rabbits, there is New Zealand white that puts on weight. In five months you will have a rabbit that weighs between two and five kilograms. Rabbit rearing is one thing you can do without much. You can construct your own cages. It just requires making sure you put in space for ventilation," she advises.

wanted.

**Proper methods**  
With time, however, she realised that if she spaced the birth rate for the does, it would give them time to rest and also time for the kittens to bond with their mothers.  
With this practice, she would get good breeds. The rabbits put on weight and the number at every birth increased. She knew how to care for them. She had created a hygienic environment for them.

**Feeding**  
"Rabbits do not need a lot of feeding. You can feed them a lot of common green grass such as black jack and banana peelings. However, you need to treat the grasses. Wash the vines in salt water to rid it of infections. Otherwise, the rabbits will develop diarrhoea and fall sick," says the rabbit farmer and fall advises. She also feeds the rabbits on pellets, wheat and maize bran.  
Rabbits with the same genes tend to die early therefore Mutesi advises against inbreeding or incest.  
Rabbits need vitamins, boosters and antibiotics "It can survive outside without any treatment. Once you cage them, all they get is what you feed them. Some foods are not good to be served to rabbits every day, for example the wild grasses. If you do not give them multivitamins, they will become weak," she adds.

**Benefits**  
Mutesi attests rabbit urine is good manure for vegetable gardens which she runs on the side. Rabbit droppings when dried are good food for fish. She currently rears good chinchilla, New Zealand white and cross breeds. New Zealand white in Uganda, fetches her Shs40,000 for each. Her rabbits give birth after every two months. She has about 100 rabbits on her farm.

**Gestation**  
"If I let them give birth every month, they will get tired so fast and they will die. I let them feed their kittens for a month. At one month and two weeks, I will take it back for mating and I will leave the kittens with the mother for one and a half or even to the third week and then remove kittens and keep them separately, then leave the mother rabbit rest for a week."

"I do not mate one rabbit. I take about 10 to mate in one day because I want them to give birth on the same day. For them to give birth to good kittens," Mutesi narrates.