

Landmark artificial insemination deal for Zimbabwe



The Zimbabwe Commercial Rabbit Breeders Association (ZICORBA) has joined hands with top South African veterinary technologists to offer artificial insemination (AI) on rabbits, in a landmark development which will thrust Zimbabwe amongst the very few countries in the world using artificial insemination on rabbits.

France and South Africa are among the few countries in the world that practice artificial insemination on rabbits.

ZICORBA president Regis Nyamakanga confirmed in an interview with Bunny World that his organisation and South Africa's Vriesit Andrology Laboratories were planning the first ever artificial insemination for rabbits in Zimbabwe in October this year, making it the first rabbit breeding programme using AI in Africa, outside South Africa.

"We have been in discussions with Mr. Henk van der Laarse, the founder and CEO of Vriesit Andrology Laboratories to deliver the first artificial insemination on rabbits in Zimbabwe as we move to revolutionize rabbit breeding in the country," Nyamakanga said.

"As part of this programme, we will soon take delivery of the state-of-the-art artificial insemination apparatus from Vriesit once we have concluded the funding arrangements for them," the ZICORBA chief said.

Nyamakanga said the idea of introducing artificial insemination was to boost production at reduced cost.

"We are looking at artificial insemination as an option to reduce the buck numbers, and consequently production cost. With artificial insemination, we will be selecting the best

productive male rabbits (bucks) for semen donors," he said.

The aim was to serve between 20 and 40 does (female rabbits) with one collection of semen, the plan being to inseminate up to 80 does within an hour after semen collection. The conception rate is expected to be between 70 percent and 80 percent.

"We will be working with Vriesit Andrology Laboratories to deliver AI on rabbits in Zimbabwe starting October this year. This will also include training of ZICORBA members on rabbit breeding using AI.

"The training will cover breeding methods, semen collection, diluting semen and insemination of does," Nyamakanga said.



Regis Nyamakanga,
ZICORBA National President



Henk van der Laarse,
CEO Vriesit Andrology Laboratories, SA

ZICORBA moves to stabilise rabbits price yo-yo

.....setting the tone for industry growth



The Zimbabwe Commercial Rabbit Breeders Association (ZICORBA) has come up with recommended prices for rearing rabbits for breeding stock and for meat, in a move that is meant to provide direction in a sector where prices are set at the whim of “unscrupulous” middlemen.

Secretary General Siphosethu Ncube-Moyo said the stability of prices would set the tone for and consequently accelerate the anticipated growth in Zimbabwe’s nascent rabbit industry, which had been dominated by a few “middlemen” who charged prices without regard to market dictates.



**Mrs Siphosethu Ncube-Moyo,
ZICORBA Secretary General**

“We recently commissioned a taskforce of experts to undertake a comprehensive study into the cost of producing rabbits in Zimbabwe as we realised that the growth of our sector was being asphyxiated by a few unscrupulous individuals at the expense of genuine and

hardworking farmers,” Ncube-Moyo said.

The taskforce was led by a financial and pricing expert, Mr Simba Chiwa, who was supported by Ms Rejoyce Nyamanhindi, Dr. Clive Chiduro and a rabbit farmer, Mr Jackson Yotamu.

“The taskforce submitted its findings to us and they were telling! We discovered that some individuals were charging as much as US\$10 per kilogramme of live rabbit, when in fact the cost of producing a three-month-old rabbit is US\$1.90 per kg. In the same vein, the study showed that these individuals were charging prices ranging between US\$80 and US\$150 for a single pure breed when the cost of breeding stock ranged between US\$25 to US\$41 per rabbit.

“We want to weed out these mercenary individuals from our industry as their practices are inimical to our aspirations to grow the sector, provide livelihoods to the majority of our people and to contribute to the country’s gross domestic product,” Ncube-Moyo said.

ZICORBA is the only recognised representative body of a plethora of rabbit farmers in Zimbabwe. The Association was formed in July 2020 and has branches in the country’s 10 provinces and in some of the 55 districts.

Below are the recommended prices.

Category	Age	Production cost Per kg (US \$)	Farmers’ Selling Price Per Kg (US \$)
Rabbit for meat	3 months	\$1.90	\$2.09 - \$2.47
Breeding stock	6 months	\$20.47	\$24.56 - \$40.93

Nyakabau has high hopes for rabbit farming in Zimbabwe



Mr Obert Nyakabau,

ZICORBA Vice President and Mashonaland West Chapter President

ZICORBA vice-president Obert Nyakabau hopes to see Zimbabwe's 1.8 million households taking up rabbit production in the next five years. This will help to create employment and generate the much-needed foreign currency for the country.

Mr Nyakabau, who is also ZICORBA Chapter President for Mashonaland West, said he is ramping up production at his rabbitry in Murombedzi and aims to grow his rabbit population from 52 to a staggering 1 000 rabbits in the next 12 months.

"Our thrust as ZICORBA is to support government's five-year Livestock Growth Plan by ensuring that the 1.8 million households in the country are engaged in rabbit production in order to improve livelihoods, create employment and generate foreign currency for our country," ZICORBA's second-in-command said.

Mr Nyakabau, who is also an educationist, started rearing rabbits many years ago at Nyamuzuwe High School in Mutoko with his agricultural teacher, Mr Bvunzawabaya. They started with six does and one buck. The school rabbitry soon grew to 388 rabbits.

"My dream is to see ZICORBA soaring to new heights and Zimbabwe taking its rightful place in Africa and the world at large as far as rabbit production is concerned."

He later moved to Murombedzi in Mashonaland West where he started the Mbizi Rabbitry under Zvimba District. The rabbitry has a total of 52 rabbits.

He is a proud father who has encouraged his sons and daughter to undertake rabbit farming. His influence in the province is fast growing and with vast experience under his belt, Mr Nyakabau continues to inspire many prospective ZICORBA members.

As a founding member of ZICORBA, he is optimistic about the future of rabbit industry in Zimbabwe.

"My dream is to see ZICORBA soaring to new heights and Zimbabwe taking its rightful place in Africa and the world at large, as far as rabbit production is concerned. As ZICORBA, we hope to start earning foreign currency from rabbit exports in the shortest possible time", said Mr Nyakabau.

If you are in Mashonaland West province and want to join ZICORBA, reach out to Mr Obert Nyakabau on 0773659534

Mudzingwa appointed ZICORBA National Training Coordinator

Seasoned rabbit breeder Garisanai Mudzingwa has been appointed ZICORBA's National Training Coordinator with effect from 1 May 2021 as the Association intensifies efforts to commercialise rabbit production in Zimbabwe.

Gari's appointment brings to 13 the number of ZICORBA full time staff, that include National Coordinator, Communications Officer, Web Master and 9 Youth Ambassadors/Chapter Coordinators.

Gari has 23-years rabbit keeping experience, of which seven were spent in South Africa at the Gauteng Rabbit Breeders Association, where he was a trainer and judge.

He is based in Chendambuya in Manicaland Province, where he is supporting a group of farmers venture into rabbit production.

ZICORBA Secretary General, Siphosethu Ncube-Moyo, said training was central to the Association's efforts to commercialise the production of what has previously been a somewhat neglected and informally produced protein source, rabbit.

**Mr Garisanai Mudzingwa,
ZICORBA National Training Coordinator**



Are you serious about rabbit farming? If your answer is yes, then get in touch with the winning team. ZICORBA, the only collective voice of rabbit farmers in Zimbabwe

See back page for contact details



“Knowing your breeds is a key factor in running a successful Rabbitry”

Farmer Jane

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YOUR
BREEDS**



Join Zimbabwe's only collective voice of rabbit farmers and grow your business today

*** BREED : AMERICAN SABLE RABBIT**

The American Sable is a commercial breed that was developed by Otto Brock in 1924.

By crossbreeding many purebred Chinchillas, he developed the American Sable rabbit with different coloring. Recessive genes in the Chinchilla lines produced an entirely new color, with an identical body shape.

Distinct Features: The main colour of these rabbits is sepia brown with darker sepia brown over the back, feet, face, ears and tail. It has graduated coloring with a sepia brown over the flanks that darkens on the face, ears, feet, back and tail.

RATING : * * * *

American Sable rabbits have a lifespan of 5-10 years and weigh around 4- 4.5 kgs when fully grown.



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Rabbit production brings financial freedom to Kafungura

In 2012 Mrs. Kholiwe Kafungura chucked her 15-year career as a mathematics teacher, opting to venture into business but the going was not easy until she tried her hand at rabbit production.

“As an open-minded Mathematics teacher, I realized that times are changing and my academic certificates alone could not give me the financial freedom and the lifestyle I desire,” says Kafungura, who is ZICORBA’s Chapter president for Mashonaland East.

“When I quit teaching nine years ago, I tried a number of ventures including a hardware business, a general dealer shop, timber sales and network marketing but all these initiatives came unstuck. It was only when I started rearing rabbits that a world of possibilities opened up.

“Rabbit production has given my family excess meat which I supply to other people in exchange for money, poultry and other commodities, which gradually opened multiple revenue stream for me. I am rewriting my own history and two years from now I see myself being one of the most influential business women in Zimbabwe,” says Kafungura.

In an interview with Bunny World at her rabbitry in Ruwa, Kafungura retraced her journey into rabbit farming.

“When I was running the timber business, I used to have a customer who would occasionally buy gum poles from me in large quantities. I was curious to know what he used them for. He told me that he had a backyard rabbitry that he was repairing.

“I later learnt that he had acquired a lorry from the proceeds of his rabbit sales, which meant his project was doing well. I told him that I was also interested in rearing rabbits. He gave me nine does and one buck in exchange for poles and he agreed to mentor me. That is how my cuniculture journey began.

As the ZICORBA Mash East Chapter president’s project grew, she soon realized a gap in her knowledge of rabbit farming and sought to work with other like-minded farmers to ensure that her project continued to succeed.

“I realized the need to share knowledge of rabbits with other people doing rabbit projects for my project to be successful. I joined several rabbit farming WhatsApp groups and suddenly in one of them people began talking about forming an association which would further the interests of rabbit farmers in Zimbabwe. Powerful and fruitful discussions were held daily in this group with great momentum and motivation which was gradually rising to new levels daily. I made my con-



**Mrs Kholiwe Kafungura,
ZICORBA Mashonaland East Chapter President**

tributions towards forging this big dream and in July 2020 ZICORBA was born.

“In ZICORBA I have seen high levels of efficiency and professionalism that push me to do more. I have benefited from the exposure to great rabbit farmers.

Kafungura is optimistic about the future of rabbit farming in Zimbabwe as more and more people venture into cuniculture production.



Kafungura’s recently completed project site with a 60 rabbit carrying capacity

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WE ARE ZICORBA

Rabbit Meat
From Cape to Cairo



ZICORBA
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Celebrating Africa Day

Across The Borders



Uganda Rabbit Association forges strategic partnership with ZICORBA



The Buck and Doe Farmers Uganda (BuDoFa-U), an association of rabbit farmers in the east African country, and the Zimbabwe Commercial Rabbit Breeders Association (ZICORBA) are forging a strategic partnership as part of a wider agenda for greater cooperation among African rabbit producers.

The founder of Buck and Doe Farmers Uganda, Ms Maggie Lukowe, said in an interview with Bunny World that her association also had forged a partnership with the Rabbit Breeders Association of Kenya (RABAK). ZICORBA also has a partnership with RABAK.

“We have a strategic partnership with RABAK in Kenya mainly for knowledge transfer, sourcing of quality breeds and benchmarking on standards,” she said.

The boss of the 112-member association said BuDoFa and ZICORBA would be cooperating on training, exchange of technical information and breeding stock.

Ms Lukowe said the prospects for rabbit production in Uganda in particular and Africa in general looked bright.

“The future of rabbit production is very bright albeit a few challenges. We have created awareness about the goodness in rabbit meat as the healthiest white meat. We have also marketed the byproducts like the urine and the interest is growing from both urban and rural farmers. Rabbit meat is getting into the mainstream menus in hotels and upscale eateries around Kampa-

la. So, the demand for meat has increased.

“The market is still domestic. Retailing is done at household level and to eateries, restaurants and some hotels in and around Kampala. There are seasonal orders for meat from clubs such as Rotary clubs during fellowships and corporate events.

“We have carried out trainings for chefs to skill them on portioning and trying out different recipes.



BuDoFa-U founder, Ms Maggie Lukowe

“As a nascent industry, we have challenges. There is a lot of ignorance about rabbit production and the struggle of acceptance of rabbit meat as a regular on menus is still on going. We also have a challenge of sourcing for quality breeds. They are expensive and it is a logistical nightmare getting them from Kenya especially during this COVID-19 era.”

“In addition, we have a challenge of getting quality veterinary drugs. Our market is riddled with sub-standard products including drugs.

The cost of feeds is also going up, mainly because of scarcity of maize bran. Most of the maize products are exported. Some feed manufacturers are not certified and this creates doubt. We also do not have vet doctors who are specialized in small animals such as rabbits. So, most treatments for rabbits are by trial and error, Ms Lukowe said.

“ Besides being tasty, Rabbit meat is suitable for special diets such as those for the aged, heart disease patients, low sodium diets and weight reduction diets ”

It's magnifique



Chef Pablo

**RECIPE
OF
THE
MONTH**

Rabbit in Mustard Sauce

Ingredients

1 rabbit, cut into serving pieces
Salt
4 tablespoons butter
2 large shallots, chopped
1/2 cup white wine
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup grainy country mustard
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1/2 cup heavy cream
4 tablespoons finely chopped parsley

Method

Sprinkle rabbit pieces with salt:
Salt your rabbit pieces well and set aside at room temperature for 30 minutes to an hour.
Brown the rabbit pieces in butter:
Heat the butter over medium heat in a large sauté pan with a lid. Pat the rabbit pieces dry and brown them in the butter. Do this at a moderate pace – you don't want the butter to scorch – and don't let the rabbit pieces touch each other. Do it in batches if you need to.
Once the rabbit is browned, remove it to a bowl.
Brown the chopped shallots:
Add the shallots and brown them well. This will take 3-4 minutes.

Make the sauce:

Pour in the white wine and turn the heat to high. Scrape off any browned bits on the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon. Add the mustard, thyme and water and bring to a rolling boil. Taste the sauce for salt and add some if needed.
Coat rabbit with sauce, cover and simmer:
Add the rabbit pieces, coat them with the sauce, then drop the heat to low. Cover and simmer gently for 45 minutes. You want the meat to be nearly falling off the bone. It might need more time, but should not need more than an hour total. Wild rabbits sometimes need more time.
When the meat is ready, gently remove it to a platter
Reduce the sauce, add cream and parsley:
Turn the heat to high and boil the sauce down by half. Turn off the heat and add the cream and parsley. Stir the sauce to combine.

Serve:

Return the rabbit to the pan. Coat with the sauce and serve at once. Serve this dish with crusty bread and a big white wine, such as a white Bordeaux, white Cotes du Rhone blend or a buttery California Chardonnay.

