

## Evaluation of the varying inclusion levels of lysine supplement on the growth performance and carcass yield of broiler finisher chickens

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**Target audience:** Animal scientists, Poultry farmers, Feed millers, Researchers

### Abstract

*This study was conducted to investigate the effects of varying levels of dietary lysine supplement on growth performance and carcass yield of broiler finisher chickens. One hundred and fifty (150) 4 weeks old broiler chickens were divided into 5 groups of 30 birds. Each group was further divided into 3 replicates of 10 birds in a Completely Randomized Design. The 5 groups were randomly assigned to five isocaloric and isonitrogenous diets containing lysine supplement with inclusion levels of 0.125, 0.100 (control), 0.075, 0.050 and 0.025 %. The experimental diets and drinking water were given to the birds ad libitum for a period of 4 weeks (28 days) during which average initial weights, feed intake, weight gains and final weights at the end of the study period were taken. In evaluating carcass yield, two birds with weights closest to the average of each replicate from each treatment were selected, slaughtered, scalded, plucked, eviscerated and dissected. The dressed carcass, carcass components and internal organs were weighed and expressed as percentage of live weights. Statistical analyses of data obtained revealed significant differences ( $P < 0.05$ ) in all growth performance indices between treatments. Also, dressing percentages and proportions of breasts, drumsticks, hearts and gizzards differed significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) between treatments. It was concluded that reduction of dietary lysine supplement to as low as 25 % of recommended level did not have any adverse effect on growth performance and carcass yield of broiler finisher chickens.*

**Keywords:** Broilers; Growth Performance; Carcass; Lysine supplement

### Description of Problem

The two major indicators in maximizing performance of broiler species are growth performance and meat yield being the primary purpose for which broilers are raised. Generally, optimum performance for any species is achieved by the plane of nutrition given and the ability of the birds to

utilize the feed provided at the highest level such that maximum output in terms of 14 growth and body development is achieved with the least quantity of feed with other management factors being provided to support the task (1).

It is a common knowledge that feed constitutes the greatest and most costly input

in any livestock farm; especially poultry (2; 3). However, for optimum yield in poultry, the diet must contain all necessary feed nutrients which are carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, minerals, vitamins and water in appropriate amounts and right proportions.

For meat birds such as broiler chickens, key amongst these nutrients is protein; for it is the primary nutrient required for muscle building (4; 5; 6). Intact proteins are broken down by hydrolysis during digestion to yield amino acids, which are then utilized in the body to fulfil a variety of functions, which include: structural components of skin, feathers, and muscle, as well as filling important metabolic roles as blood plasma proteins, enzymes, hormones, and immune antibodies which are all individually involved in specific functions in the body (7). These amino acids have been classified as essential and non-essential because the former cannot be synthesized by the body either at all or in amounts not enough to meet physiological needs, while the latter could be synthesized by the body (8). Commercial poultry diets are routinely supplemented with essential amino acids due to the deficiency of these nutrients in most feed ingredients (9). According to (10), some of the advantages of amino acid supplementation include a reduction in the cost of production, an increase in weight gain, optimization of meat yield, a decrease in carcass fat and uniformity in nutrient intake. Amino acid supplementation also helps to conserve resources and reduce waste (nitrogen excretion) through better utilization for protein synthesis (11). Depending on the basal feedstuffs used in diets formulated, methionine and lysine occupy important positions in poultry nutrition and generally ranks as the first and

second limiting amino acids (12). It is necessary to note that bird requirements for efficient development are based on amino acids in the diet and not on crude protein (13), but the crude protein and amino acid status of a diet also influence the carcass composition of broilers with increased carcass protein and reduced carcass fat (14). Notably, adverse effects in performance and carcass yield are perfectly possible in this period due to lysine limitation, since its contents in meat are exceptionally high. Besides, breast meat represents around 30 % of total broiler meat and 50 % of total edible protein (15). Amongst all the ingredients used in compounding poultry feed, lysine and methionine are the costliest per unit weight, and since feed 15 accounts for above 70 % of the cost of feeding poultry (16), it became expedient, in order to minimize cost, to consider varying the quantity of lysine supplement given to broilers and to see if the levels of lysine contained in the other ingredients can support optimum growth and development of the birds. Therefore, the effects of graded the levels of dietary lysine supplement on growth performance and carcass yield of broiler finisher chickens was investigated in this study

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Experimental site**

The experiment was carried out at the Poultry unit of the Livestock Investigation Division, National Veterinary Research Institute, Vom which is situated in Vwang district, Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. It has total land area of 510 km<sup>2</sup> with Elevation of approximately 1280 metres above sea level and mean annual rainfall of 131.75 cm and a temperature range of 12°C - 33°C (54f-91f) (17)

### **Experimental design and management of birds**

One hundred and fifty (150) day-old unsexed broiler chicks were purchased from a reputable hatchery. They were brooded in coal pot heated house together for 4 weeks on commercial broiler starter diets. At four weeks old, the birds were randomly allotted to 5 dietary treatments of 30 birds. Each treatment was further divided into 3 replicates of 10 birds in Completely Randomized Design and given the experimental diets. The 5 diets which were isocaloric (2780 kcalME/kg) and isonitrogenous (21 % Crude Protein) contained 0.125, 0.100 (Control), 0.075, 0.050 and 0.025 % lysine supplement. The birds were managed in a well cleaned and disinfected poultry house in deep litter pens measuring 1.2 (w) x 2.2 (l) x 1.2 (h) metres with rice bran as litter material. They were initially weighed at 28 days of age after which feed intake (obtained by subtracting weight of left-over feed from weight of feed given the previous day) and subsequent weights of the birds were taken and recorded on weekly intervals. The birds had free access to feed and water throughout the entire four (4) weeks of the experiment during which data for feed intake and weight gains were taken. All necessary vaccinations and preventive and curative medications were given to the birds in the course of the study.

### **Source of test ingredients 16**

The lysine and methionine used were the branded types of L-Lysine and Methionine, while other feed ingredients were obtained from commercial feed stuff vendors within Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State

### **Feed intake and weight data collection**

A known weight of feed was weighed out and given daily. The leftovers after each day's meal were weighed. Feed consumption for each day was obtained by the difference between the weights of total feed given and the leftovers for each day. Average feed consumption per bird per replicate for the day was calculated by dividing the total weight of feed consumed by the number of birds in each replicate. Birds in each replicate were weighed on arrival and subsequently weighed at the end of each week. The average body weight per bird per week was obtained from each replicate by dividing the total body weight in each replicate by the total number of birds in the replicate.

### **Determination of carcass characteristics**

The birds were fasted for 18 hours before the final weights at the end of the feeding trail (8 weeks of age) were recorded for all the treatments and replicates. Two birds having their weights closest to the average of each replicate for all the 5 treatments were selected, slaughtered, bled, scalded and plucked. Heads and shanks of each of the birds were severed (cut off), the carcass eviscerated and the dressed carcass weighed. After this, the different meat yielding parts of the carcass (breast, back, wings, thighs, drumsticks), abdominal fat and internal organs (heart, liver, gizzard and spleen) were cut at specific points as described by (18). The carcass and all the cut parts and internal organs were weighed for each of the chickens using a sensitive electronic scale. The weights of the various carcass components were then expressed as percentages of their respective live weights

**Experimental diets****Table 1:** Ingredient composition of broiler experimental diets

Ingredients	Dietary levels of lysine supplement (%)				
	0.125	0.100	0.015	0.050	0.025
Maize	49.250	49.150	49.160	49.200	49.230
Wheat offal	7.385	7.370	7.370	7.380	7.380
Rice bran	4.930	4.920	4.920	4.920	4.930
Soya bean cake	34.310	34.360	34.360	34.390	34.410
Fish meal	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Bone meal	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500
Lime stone	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Salt	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250
Premix (BF)	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250
Lysine	0.000	0.100	0.075	0.050	0.025
Methionine	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.000</b>	<b>100.000</b>	<b>100.000</b>	<b>100.000</b>	<b>100.000</b>
M E (kcal/kg)	2780.761	2778.072	2778.410	2780.691	2782.403
Crude protein (%)	21.042	21.051	21.051	21.069	21.082
Crude fibre (%)	4.790	4.791	4.793	4.793	4.796
Ether extract (%)	4.172	4.165	4.164	4.168	4.169
Calcium (%)	0.934	0.933	0.938	0.938	0.938
Phosphorus (%)	0.750	0.750	0.749	0.750	0.750
Lysine (%)	1.314	1.294	1.265	1.242	1.217
Methionine (%)	0.461	0.461	0.461	0.461	0.461

Key: M E = Metabolizable Energy

**Statistical analyses**

All data obtained were subjected to One-way Analysis of Variance using SPSS version 25 (19) software package. Where applicable, significant differences between means were determined using the Duncan's option of the same package.

**Results and discussion**

Calculated Metabolizable Energy (ME) values of the test diets (Table 1) ranged from 2780.76 to 2782.40 kcalME/kg slightly

below the 2900 to 3200 kcalME/kg recommended by (1, 6, & 20), which may not be a negative factor as broilers have the ability to utilize much lower energy diets (2280 kcalME/kg) without any measurable differences in the amount of energy consumed per unit live weight gain (21).

However, the calculated values for all the other nutrients are within the higher limits of the recommended range for broiler chickens. All the other nutrients are within the ranges recommended by (22). The

**Table 2:** Proximate composition of experimental diets containing graded levels of lysine supplement

Nutrients	Dietary levels of lysine supplement (%)				
	0.125	0.100	0.075	0.050	0.025
Moisture	9.95	11.85	9.80	10.30	10.25
Crude protein	23.02	21.29	22.29	22.43	21.84
Crude fibre	10.70	11.10	7.40	5.77	6.50
Lipids	4.40	2.65	4.30	4.65	3.85
Ash	7.25	6.70	7.15	7.25	7.20
Metabolizable Energy	3100.40	2820.65	3240.10	3370.97	3230.45
Nitrogen Free Extract	43.28	43.41	46.56	49.30	47.36
Calcium	1.05	0.78	0.85	1.12	0.80
Phosphorus	0.10	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.09

proximate compositions of experimental diets containing graded levels of lysine supplement (Table 2) gives higher level (23.02 %) of crude protein recorded in diet containing 0.025 % lysine and least (21.29 %) recorded in diet containing 0.100 % lysine although across all dietary groups crude protein contents are not far apart. The crude protein levels are slightly higher than the crude protein requirements of broiler finisher chickens of 19 between 20 and 22 % by (20) and (22). Dietary crude fibre (CF) levels were higher than recommended levels of between 5 – 8 % by (22) for broiler chickens on diets containing 0.0125 and 0.100 % lysine supplement. The highest CF level was recorded in diet containing 0.100 % level of lysine and least in diet containing 0.050 % lysine supplement. The fibre levels of the first 2 treatments (0.125 and 0.100 %) are higher than the recommended range of 3 – 7 % for broiler chickens by (23). The reason for this is not clear and probably can be attributed to error during the analysis. The other treatments are within the recommended

range with levels reducing with decreasing levels of dietary lysine supplement. This finding is in agreement with the study conducted by (24) who reported higher crude fibre with higher levels of lysine inclusion. The levels of lipids/fat in the diets and other nutrients which are Metabolizable Energy, Nitrogen Free Extract, Calcium and Phosphorus are all within recommended ranges for broiler chickens.

### Growth performance

Table 3 shows the Growth performance of broiler finishers fed diets containing graded levels of dietary lysine. A significantly lower ( $P < 0.05$ ) weight was recorded in the final weights of the birds in treatment containing 0.075% of lysine, while no significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) was recorded across other treatments. Only treatment containing 0.025% of lysine recorded a significantly different value in the feed conversion ratio of the birds. This is not in agreement with the report of (10) that some of the advantages of amino acid

supplementation include a reduction in the cost of production, an increase in weight gain, optimization of meat yield, a decrease in carcass fat and uniformity in nutrient intake.

**Table 3:** Growth performance of broiler finishers fed diets containing graded levels of dietary lysine

Parameters	Dietary levels of lysine supplement (%)					SEM
	0.125	0.100	0.075	0.050	0.025	
Initial weights (g)	890.00	890.00	836.67	868.33	733.33	32.52 <sup>NS</sup>
Final weights (g)	2220.00 <sup>a</sup>	2233.33 <sup>a</sup>	2116.67 <sup>b</sup>	2223.33 <sup>a</sup>	2250.00 <sup>a</sup>	29.90*
Weight gains (g)	1330.00 <sup>ab</sup>	1343.33 <sup>ab</sup>	1280.00 <sup>b</sup>	1355.00 <sup>ab</sup>	1516.67 <sup>a</sup>	45.85*
Feed intake (g)	4002.00 <sup>ab</sup>	4039.67 <sup>ab</sup>	3961.67 <sup>ab</sup>	4189.83 <sup>a</sup>	3911.67 <sup>b</sup>	57.26*
FCR	3.04 <sup>b</sup>	3.02 <sup>b</sup>	3.16 <sup>b</sup>	3.10 <sup>b</sup>	2.63 <sup>a</sup>	0.10*
Feed cost (N /kg)	461.91	461.28	460.47	460.10	458.48	0.23 <sup>NS</sup>
Feed Cost/kg Gain	1405.51 <sup>a</sup>	1392.47 <sup>a</sup>	1453.78 <sup>a</sup>	1425.35 <sup>a</sup>	1206.26 <sup>b</sup>	46.31 <sup>NS</sup>

<sup>a,b</sup> Means in the same row with different superscripts are significantly different (P<0.05)  
S E M = Standard Error of Mean, N S = Not Significant (P>0.05), \* = Significant (P<0.05)

Table 3 shows the growth performance of the broiler finisher fed diets containing graded levels of lysine supplement. The initial weights of the birds were not significantly different (P>0.05). Also, the final weights, weight gains, feed intake and feed conversion ratio values were not affected (P>0.05) by levels of lysine supplement. The total weight gains divided by the number of days would translate to 47.50, 47.98, 45.71, 48.3, 54.14 g/bird/day for birds fed diets 1 – 5 respectively. Likewise average daily feed intake values would be 142.93, 144.27, 141.49, 139.70 g/bird/day respectively. These values are in agreement with the average weight gains and feed intake values reported by (20). Feed conversion ratio values ranging from 2.62 to 3.16 are slightly higher than the optimum values of between 1.8 to 2.2 reported by (1). The reason for the slightly poorer feed efficiency might be due to low temperatures

recorded during the months of July to September as generally animals are known to consume more feed during cooler, compared to warmer periods (25) in order to meet up with the higher energy demands for body functions and maintenance of body temperature within optimum range. Other reasons could be as a result of the genetic quality of the birds which could not be ascertained in this study. Generally, the lower level of dietary lysine did not appear to have any adverse effect on the growth performance of the birds which is not in agreement with report of (15) who stated that "adverse effects in performance and carcass yield are perfectly possible in this period due to lysine limitation, since its contents in meat are exceptionally high". Also, (7) stated that one of the importance of inclusion of amino acid supplement in poultry diets is optimization of meat yield. It is however observed the FCR values of birds on the least

level of lysine supplement (0.025%) were significantly better ( $P < 0.05$ ) than those of the other treatments. The cost of feed per kilogramme decreased as the levels of lysine supplement in the diets were reduced. Subsequently, the feed cost per kilogramme weight gain decreased as levels of lysine supplement was reduced. Noteworthy, is that the birds fed diets with the least level of lysine supplement 22 (0.025 %) recorded significantly less feed cost per unit weight gain compared to the other treatments

In table 4, dressing percentages were significantly higher in birds fed diets containing 0.050 and 0.075 % lysine supplements compared to those fed diets containing higher levels if lysine including the ones fed the control diet (0.100 % lysine). Proportions of drumsticks, heart and gizzard to live body weights were also highest ( $P < 0.05$ ) with birds fed diets containing 0.050 % lysine supplement compared to the other treatments. Again, this contradicts the findings of the last 2 groups of authors (7 & 15) stated above who specified the need for amino acid supplementation to obtain optimum levels of meat yield in broilers.

#### 5.2 Conclusion and application

Lysine inclusion at minimal level of 0.025 % supported growth performance better than 0.125 % and even the ones fed diets that contained the recommended level (0.100 %) of lysine supplement. Feed conversion ratio of birds on the least level of lysine was also better than what was obtained with other dietary treatments giving a better feed efficiency value. Thus, it is concluded that reducing lysine supplement level by as low as 25 % of recommended rates can support comparative or even better growth performance in broiler finisher chickens provided other ingredients used alongside

are of good quality. The following applications may be considered:

To obtain optimum growth performance and carcass yield, lysine supplement can be included in in broiler chicken diets at minimal level of 0.025%. This is provided, the other ingredients used to make the feed are of good quality, especially the protein sources.

**Table 4:** Carcass yield of broiler finishers fed diets containing graded levels of lysine supplement

Parameters	Dietary levels of lysine supplement (%)					
	0.125	0.100	0.075	0.050	0.025	SEM
Live weights (g)	2300.00	2166.67	2233.33	2146.00	2216.67	50.84 <sup>NS</sup>
Carcass components expressed in % live weight						
Dressing percentages	73.68 <sup>b</sup>	75.05 <sup>b</sup>	82.21 <sup>a</sup>	85.01 <sup>a</sup>	77.01 <sup>b</sup>	1.53 <sup>*</sup>
Necks	3.75	3.68	4.03	4.23	4.64	0.29 <sup>NS</sup>
Backs	10.23	10.53	11.15	10.52	11.63	0.30 <sup>NS</sup>
Breasts	27.54 <sup>a</sup>	25.79 <sup>ab</sup>	23.66 <sup>b</sup>	26.49 <sup>a</sup>	28.51 <sup>a</sup>	0.76 <sup>*</sup>
Wings	8.30	7.85	8.34	8.25	8.71	0.28 <sup>NS</sup>
Thighs	11.08	10.14	11.51	10.40	11.35	0.44 <sup>NS</sup>
Drumsticks	9.95 <sup>ab</sup>	9.30 <sup>b</sup>	10.53 <sup>ab</sup>	10.90 <sup>a</sup>	11.03 <sup>a</sup>	0.32 <sup>*</sup>
Abdominal fat	0.48	0.26	0.40	0.44	0.22	0.10 <sup>NS</sup>
Internal organs (giblets)						
Heart	0.49 <sup>ab</sup>	0.49 <sup>ab</sup>	0.46 <sup>b</sup>	0.53 <sup>a</sup>	0.49 <sup>ab</sup>	0.02 <sup>*</sup>
Liver	2.27	2.13	2.21	2.10	2.05	0.06 <sup>NS</sup>
Gizzard	2.19 <sup>a</sup>	2.19 <sup>a</sup>	2.02 <sup>b</sup>	2.20 <sup>a</sup>	1.87 <sup>b</sup>	0.07 <sup>*</sup>
Spleen	0.13	0.12	0.19	0.11	0.14	0.02 <sup>NS</sup>

<sup>a,b</sup> Means in the same row with different superscripts are significantly different (P<0.05)

S E M = Standard Error of Means, N S = Not significant (P>0.05), \* = Significant (P<0.05)

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