

## **The case for road runners**

T.L. Magwirotto

In this article, I want to argue a case for keeping road runners. I will state some of the advantages and disadvantages, and leave the verdict to you the reader.

I have kept road runners myself as part of a project at my work-place to take advantage of wastage/spillages of feed. We kept various classes of stock, and there was enough feed wastage to worry me. Then I thought of a perfect way of making the spilled feed useful: grow road runners!

This points to an important aspect of raising road runners. Road runners are bred and reared for their hard-set, tasty meat. They are not known for fast growth. The selling point is the *quality* of the meat, not the quantity!

Because road runners can be raised on "wastes" from the kitchen or garden or some other project, they can virtually be kept at "no" extra cost. This is a huge advantage, considering that in livestock production, feed accounts for 75-80% of costs.

If you want higher level of production, do NOT feed them broiler or layers mash: the costs are too high. Broiler feed is meant for birds bred for fast growth. Layers mash is meant for birds with high egg-laying capacity. Road-runners are neither, so feeding them such specialised feed is a waste. Rather, if you want high production, small grains like millet and sorghum could be better since these have higher crude protein than maize.

Finally, from a management viewpoint, road runners are less demanding. You will not be changing bedding every few days, certainly you will not worry too much about heat or such things unless you are raising chicks separately from the hens.

And finally, the markets. Road runners do have a ready market. People are willing to pay for the quality tasty meat of road runners. There is a resurgence of taste for traditional foods, and road runners are back in culinary fashion. So why not try them?