# english black

# Package 88, Script 6

July 2009

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**Common rabbit diseases and how to treat them successfully**

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### Notes to broadcaster

Rabbits suffer from a variety of common diseases that can be easily prevented or treated. By having a general knowledge of these diseases, the rabbit owner can save money on visits to the vet and get the best performance from the animals in terms of meat and income.

In the two-part program that follows, Chief Asema Yuwa, a 64 year old retired agricultural extension worker and rabbit production expert whose radio campaigns have greatly boosted rabbit production in the community recently, is at the Shawons, whose rabbits have been hit by disease.

This script is based on information from actual interviews, but the characters, other than the Chief, are fictional. You could use this script as inspiration to research and write a script on a similar topic in your area. Or you might choose to produce this script on your station, using voice actors to represent the speakers. If so, please make sure to tell your audience at the beginning of the program that the voices are those of actors.

**Characters:**

Chief Asema Yuwa: Rabbit production expert

Shawon Akaaza: Rabbit keeper

Hannah Shawon: Wife of Shawon Akaaza

**Setting:** A traditional semi-urban village compound

**Time:** Morning

**PART ONE**

**Announcer:** The rabbit production expert and retired Chief Asema Yuwa has recently been visiting rabbit farms in the community, especially those struck by disease. Our radio production team recorded one of these visits. Chief Yuwa taught villagers how to stop rabbits from getting sick and how to treat them successfully when they do fall sick. Farmers in the area see many of the same symptoms in rabbits affected by disease. So, as Chief Yuwa visits Shawon’s rabbit farm in the Mbaatee community, you must listen too. As our people say, wise orphans listen carefully from the sidelines when children with parents are being advised. Let’s listen together.

***SFX:*** *Sound of household utensils, footsteps. A knock on the door.*

**Chief Yuwa:** *(Calling off mic)* Anybody home?

**Shawon:** *(Answer from within)* Yeees! Come right in if you are good looking!

**SFX:** *Laughter*

**Shawon:** Ah. Chief Asema Yuwa, is it you? I thought it was my wife’s friend. She comes here every morning these days complaining about rabbit diseases.

**Chief Yuwa:** *(Laughs)* Not to worry, an aging man can be good looking too. That’s why I came right in. Isn’t it so, Mrs. Shawon?

**Shawon:** Ah! Yes chief. Meet Hannah, my second half. No, my first whole! *(All laugh)*

**Hannah:** Welcome, Chief Yuwa. Of course you are as good looking as a strong man of your age. Your wife Mama has been looking after your stomach very well. How is she?

**SFX:** *All laugh*

**Chief Yuwa:** She is beautiful and as strong as all the women of our village put together. How about you?

**Hannah:** *(Soberly)* I am not feeling great Chief. Our rabbits are sick and dying.

**Shawon:** Another one died yesterday.

**Chief:** That’s why I am here at your invitation. Can you take me to your rabbits?

**SFX:** *Footsteps, sounds of door opening and closing. Sound of birds and other outside noises.*

**Shawon:** Yes Chief, our people say that he who ties the knot knows best where to untie it.

**Chief:** And what is the knot this time?

**Shawon:** You convinced us on the radio to keep rabbits. Now you must show us how they can be saved from the many diseases which affect them.

**Chief Yuwa:** Please open the pen gate.

**SFX:** *Sound of metal gate opening and clanging shut.*

**Shawon:** You see? Look at the first doe here. She developed these lumps on both sides of her head.

**Chief Yuwa:** Your rabbits have been fighting. And you didn’t separate them. *(Knocks the iron nest box)* Look at the sharp edges on the nest box and the feeder. They caused the wounds. And with the fur coming into contact with the cuts, abscesses developed into those lumps.

**Shawon:** So sharp edges in the hutch can injure the rabbits?

**Chief Yuwa:** Correct! Let’s hold her up. No! Always *(repeat emphasis)* always hold your rabbit by the skin at the back of the neck and never by the ears. That’s right! You can place it under your armpit and hold the legs. Good! That’s it! Hannah, please prepare some warm water quickly. I have a sharp knife here. Let’s clip off the fur around the lumps. Hold the head gently but firmly. Yeees! Clip like this… *(sound of clipping.)*

**Shawon:** Chief, so these abscesses are the cause of the lumps?

**Chief Yuwa:** That’s right! And the abscesses have been caused by the sharp edges of the nest box.

**Shawon:** So once you clip the fur, that’s all you have to do to treat the abscesses?

**Chief Yuwa:** No! You must make a cut on the lower part of the abscess so that the liquid inside the abscess can drain freely down.

**Hannah:** *(Coming on mic)* Here is the kettle of warm water, Chief.

**Shawon:** Hannah, is the water hot so soon?

**Chief Yuwa:** No, Shawon! Warm water is what is needed. Not hot water. Hot water can kill the rabbit. Hannah, put some salt into the warm water. Stir thoroughly. Now let’s bathe the clipped area.

**SFX:** *Sound of water washing*

**Chief Yuwa:** *(Using a patient tone)* Bathe it downwards! Yes, until the whole abscess drains out. Bathe the rabbit like this morning and evening for three to four days until it finishes discharging.

**Shawon:** And then…?

**Chief Yuwa:** That’s all there is to treating abscesses in rabbits. And the result is fantastic.

**Shawon:** Chief, look at that buck. It has been shaking its head and scratching its ears without stopping.

**Chief Yuwa:** The ears of the buck are probably infested by tiny parasites called mites. When the pens are not cleaned for a time, mites are likely to come in. When they enter the ears of the rabbit, they cause irritation.

**Shawon:** *(Confused)* The irritation causes their heads to shake?

**Chief Yuwa:** Well, by shaking its head and scratching its ears, the rabbit hopes to shake off the irritation. But that won’t solve the problem.

**Shawon:** But I clean the rabbit hutch!

**Chief Yuwa:** *(Not convinced)* Regular cleaning is very important for keeping mites away from your rabbits.

**Shawon:** We’ll double our effort at cleaning then!

**Chief Yuwa:** *(Holding a rabbit)* You see what I mean! The discharge caused by the mites has formed a crust, a “haa ato” as the Tiv people call it, or a canker.

**Shawon:** Can mites kill a rabbit?

**Chief Yuwa:** Any disease can contribute towards an animal’s cause of death. It all depends on the seriousness of the infection and the response to treatment

**Shawon:** What is the treatment for mites?

**Chief Yuwa:**  For the ear mites or “haa ato,” there is a repellent, a canker lotion. Let me show you.

**SFX:** *Sound of opening drug container.*

**Chief Yuwa:** You can rub this lotion on the ears to remove scabs. You can use that container and pay me for it later.

**Shawon:** You are very helpful, Chief Yuwa.

**Chief Yuwa:** Sometimes mites can infest the face and the neck of the rabbit causing loss of fur. This disease is called mange. Many farmers here in our village call it “atsor mon.”

**Hannah:** Can this also be treated successfully?

**Chief Yuwa:** Sure! There is a cat flea powder which you can apply to the body of the rabbit. Repeat this for 10 days to ensure total control. All these medicines are available at the veterinary shops.

**Shawon:** This sounds really easy!

**Chief Yuwa:** Treating external parasites in rabbits *is* easy. When you notice loss of hair in a circle with a sore in the middle, it must be ringworm. Ringworm can spread to humans and other animals if not well-handled. You can treat it in two ways. First, you should apply iodine to the affected area every day. And second, you should separate affected animals from other rabbits.

**SFX:** *Music in and then out for one second*

**Announcer:** Chief Asema Yuwa is a rabbit production expert. He has been visiting and educating farmers on the prevention and treatment of common rabbit diseases. You have just heard the first part of our recording of Chief Yuwa’s visit to Mr. and Mrs. Shawon’s rabbit farm. We hope you have learned something about how best to look after your animals. The second and concluding part of the visit will be broadcast tomorrow at 6.pm. Tune in then.

**PART TWO**

**Announcer:** In the first part of our coverage of common rabbit diseases, Chief Asema Yuwa visited rabbit farms and taught villagers. Today we bring you the concluding part of our program. The Chief is visiting Mr. and Mrs Shawon’s farm in the Mbaatee community. He and his hosts talk about a variety of rabbit diseases that can be dangerous but which are very easy to prevent. Let’s listen together and learn.

**SFX:** *Music bridge for one second*

**Shawon:** Chief Yuwa,what are some other diseases which affect rabbits?

**Chief Yuwa:** One disease that affects young rabbits is coccidiosis. The symptoms are diarrhea, with blood in the feces, losing weight and having a swollen belly.

**Shawon:** What causes such a terrible condition?

**Chief Yuwa:** It happens when rabbits eat and drink contaminated food and water. Or when they lick their dirty feet or coat. When this happens, you see them sitting in a hunched position with their feet forward. That means they are tired and distressed.

**Hannah:** That sounds like the buck that died yesterday. He showed those symptoms for days before he died.

**Chief Yuwa:** Coccidiosis is a contagious disease. That means it can be passed by the infected rabbit to other rabbits. So infected rabbits must be isolated.

**Shawon:** So separation prevents further spread of contagious diseases like coccidiosis?

**Chief Yuwa:** Yes. Separation is the best option if you want to stop further infection of your animals.

**Shawon:** Is there a successful treatment for coccidiosis?

**Chief Yuwa:** Products called coccidiostats or coccidiocides are used to kill the parasites which cause coccidiosis. You can add them to food or pellets to protect the animals.

**Hannah:** Chief Yuwa, one of the rabbits that died had what looked like tears coming out of its eyes.

**Chief Yuwa:** That is a disease called “weepy eye” or conjunctivitis. It causes a watery discharge from the animal’s eyes.

**Hannah:** How is it caused?

**Chief Yuwa:** When bucks spray urine, or when the animals are exposed to strong draughts of air or to ammonia or just a lot of dust or burning fumes, they can get conjunctivitis.

**Hannah:** Hmmm!Is there no treatment for “weepy eye”?

**Chief Yuwa:** Veterinarians recommend a drug called neomycin. You can apply it as an ointment to the eyes of the rabbit two to three times a day for three or four days

**Shawon:** I visited Toryima’s farm the other day and saw how some of his rabbits had their “atumba” swollen.

**Chief Yuwa:**  Rabbit “atumba” are also known as milk glands. They can become swollen when a doe crashes its teats against the nest box as it hops in to feed her young. The disease is also known as mastitis, The Fulanis call it “felewre.” This is cured with an injection of a drug called penicillin.

**Hannah:** So, Chief Yuwa, are you saying that if we treat any rabbit disease, we will get this fantastic result?

**Chief Yuwa:**  No. Some common rabbit diseases can be stubborn. When your rabbits begin to grind their teeth and squint their eyes and have terrible diarrhea, it is a sign of a disease called mucoid enteritis. Other names for it are bloat or scours. The diarrhea is more severe than that in coccidiosis.

**Shawon:** Do you think bloat may be responsible for the death of some of our rabbits?

**Chief Yuwa:** Whenever you notice a discharge from the nose of the animal with a lot of sneezing, it may be quite serious. This condition is called snuffles and is caused by stress or bad ventilation in the rabbit hutch. It is highly contagious. Its scientific name is pasteurelosis, and it is incurable. Affected rabbits should be destroyed before they infect other animals.

**Hannah:** *(Aside, quietly)* Shawon, I think our rabbit hutch needs better ventilation.

**Shawon:** *(Responding, aside and quietly)*Very much so.

**Chief Yuwa:** *(Cuts in quickly)* Your rabbitary would have better ventilation if you expanded the windows and increased the shade. This would avoid heat stress in the animals. Growing medium height plants around the rabbit house is the cheapest way to control temperature around the house. But keeping a bottle of water in the freezer and placing it in the cage near the rabbit can also lower the temperature. Heat stress can happen suddenly and kill rabbits within only a few hours. So the best safeguard is prevention, which is simple.

**Hannah:** We shall take care of our rabbits henceforth. We have been trying, but I think this time we will redouble our efforts.

**Chief Yuwa:** That’s correct, Hannah. Care! Just good care can prevent lots of problems. For example, when rabbits are not treated with care or are overfed, there can be breeding problems. Rabbits can become sterile and too fat and can die suddenly. To avoid this, food should be reduced and exercise increased.

**Shawon:** Rabbits already look fragile!

**Chief Yuwa:** They still have their strength of body. But if they are handled roughly, if they are dropped or there is a loud disturbance, this can break the hindquarters of the rabbit, leading to paralysis. Keep children away from pen to avoid too much noise around the animals.

**Hannah and Shawon:** Thank you, Chief Yuwa.

**Shawon:** Your visit will really help us improve the health of our rabbits.

**Chief Yuwa:** It is important to recognize these diseases and conditions, Always seek more information on treatment from vet workers or a fellow rabbit farmer near you. Get the right information on uses, dosage, risk and precautions for all medicines before using them. Call on me, or any other extension worker whenever you think your animals are not doing ok. As for me, now I will visit Toryima who lives near the market. Let me go and see how his rabbits are doing.

**SFX:** *Footsteps, sounds of gate and wire mesh closing*

**Announcer:** Listener, you have just heard our recording of Chief Asema Yuwa’s visit to Mr. and Mrs. Shawon’s home rabbit farm. The Chief talked about a variety of rabbit diseases and how to treat them successfully. We hope you have learned how to care for your rabbits and how to prevent disease or treat it successfully. Chief Yuwa can visit your farm if you get in touch with him on his mobile number, 08054448010, or call the producer of *Farming for Life* at Radio Benue Makurdi, mobile phone number 08027051132. *Farming for Life* is our regular programme on Tuesdays at 7:00pm. Tune in then.

## Acknowledgements

Contributed by: Sachia Ngutsav, Radio Benue Makurdi, Nigeria, a Farm Radio International broadcasting partner.

Reviewed by: Terry Wollen, Director of Livestock Advocacy, Heifer International.

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