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Lean Meat for 21st Century: A Case Study of Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* [Le Souef 1907]

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Abstract

The demand for meat and meat products is growing in Nigeria, especially in urban centres. This tendency rises also the demand for non-conventional meat sources. As the population of many wildlife species in Nigeria declined due to unsustainable harvest of bush meat, animals like snails, antelopes and rodents have been domesticated. Although this improved livestock production in Nigeria, the demand for and the supply of meat is still not equilibrated. Especially the demand for lean meat is increasing in the major urban centres.

Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* the second largest bird in the world started its domestication in the United States in the early 1980's and the present trend in the production of emu in the U.S can be compared with cattle industry. For this study, emu meat was obtained from the Ajanla farms, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. There, 16 emus at age of 20 months were held in a semi-intensive system for a period of 24 months. 2 kg of the chest and drum stick of emu meat were used. The meat was trimmed of bones, nerves, blood vessels, connective tissues and external fat and kept at 4°C for 24 hours. The study assessed the proximate composition of emu meat compared to ostrich meat and conventional beef meat.

Fat content obtained was highest ($p < 0.05$) in beef with a value of 6.34% as against values of 1.00%, and 2.10% for emus and ostrich meat, respectively. Protein content was highest in emu meat and ostrich meat with 24.00% and 22.90%, respectively, and 18.95% for beef. The result also showed that emu meat had the lowest cholesterol level of 54.7 mg per 100 g compared to 63 mg per 100 g, and 86 mg per 100 g for ostrich and beef meat respectively. The results showed that emu's meat is low in fat, cholesterol and is high in protein content.

Keywords: Birds, domestication, emu, lean meat, wildlife