

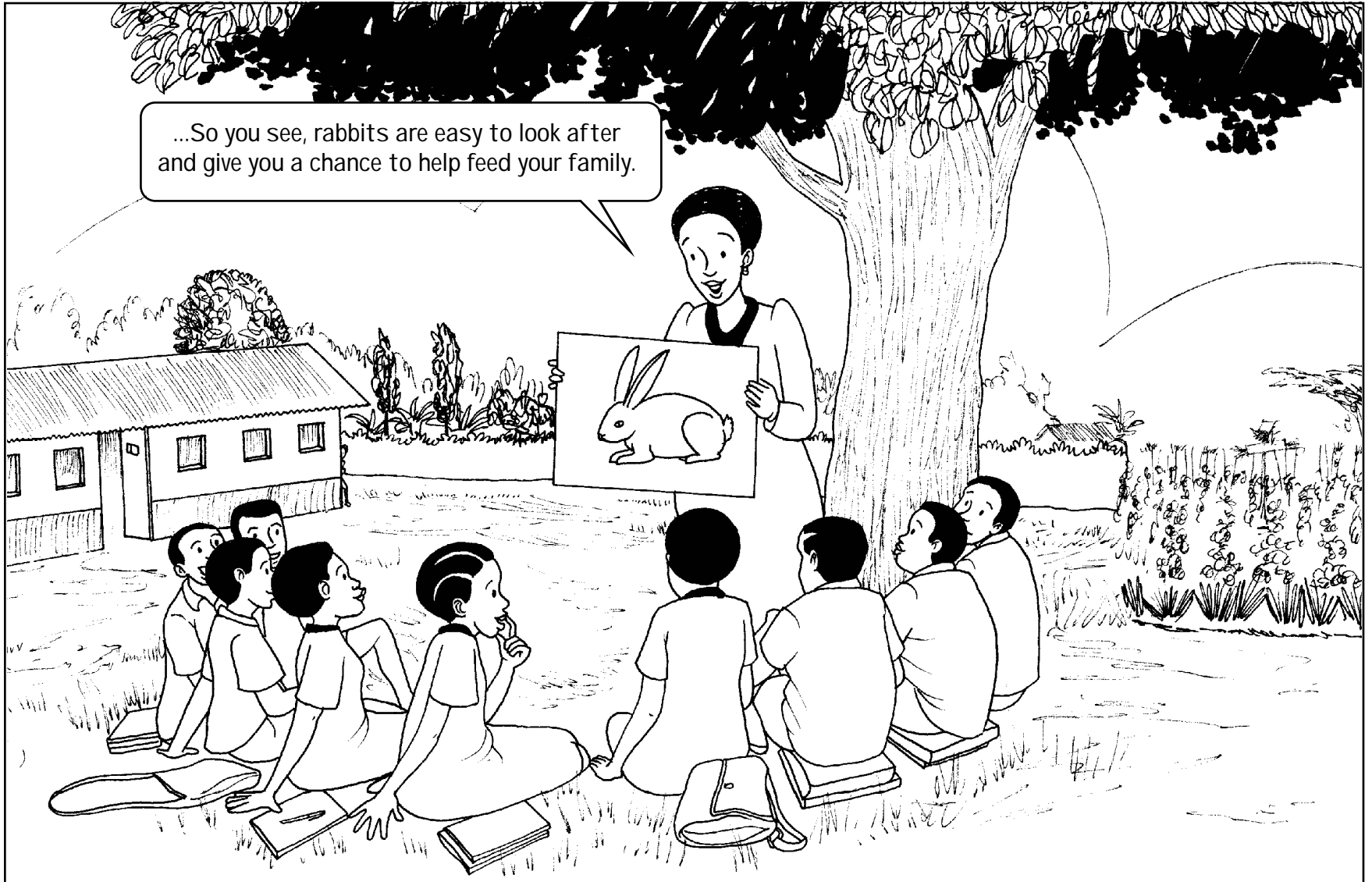
SUNGURA IN THE SHAMBA



Wambui finds out...
NEED TO KNOW LTD

DFID Department for
International
Development

...So you see, rabbits are easy to look after and give you a chance to help feed your family.

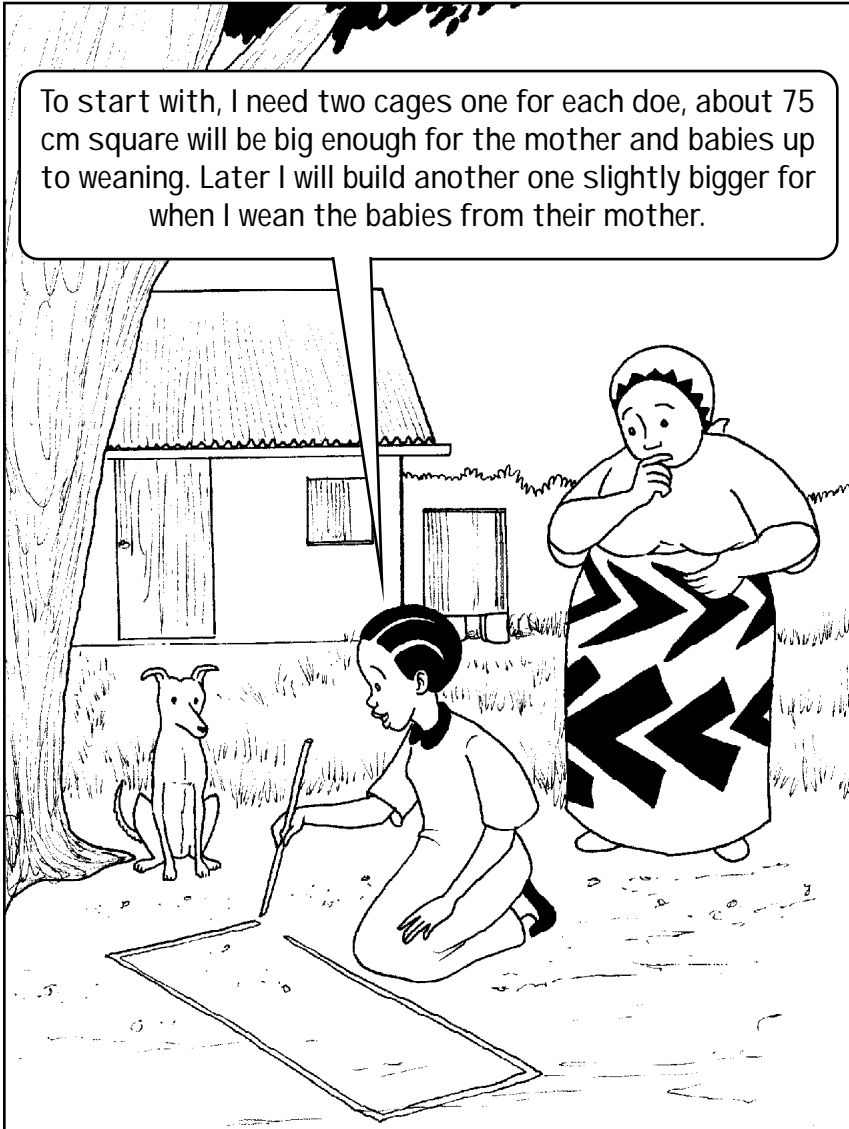








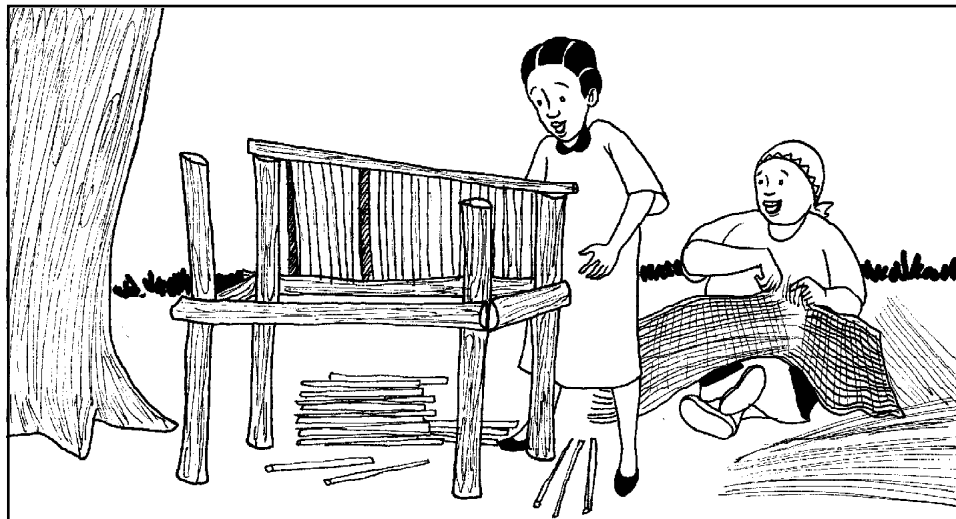
To start with, I need two cages one for each doe, about 75 cm square will be big enough for the mother and babies up to weaning. Later I will build another one slightly bigger for when I wean the babies from their mother.



But the good thing is that I can build the cages out of materials that are lying around. this bamboo will make a good floor if I split it and weave it into a mat...



...And these sticks will make strong walls to keep out the dogs and mongoose but still let plenty of light and air in...



Then I put the bamboo mat to form the floor.



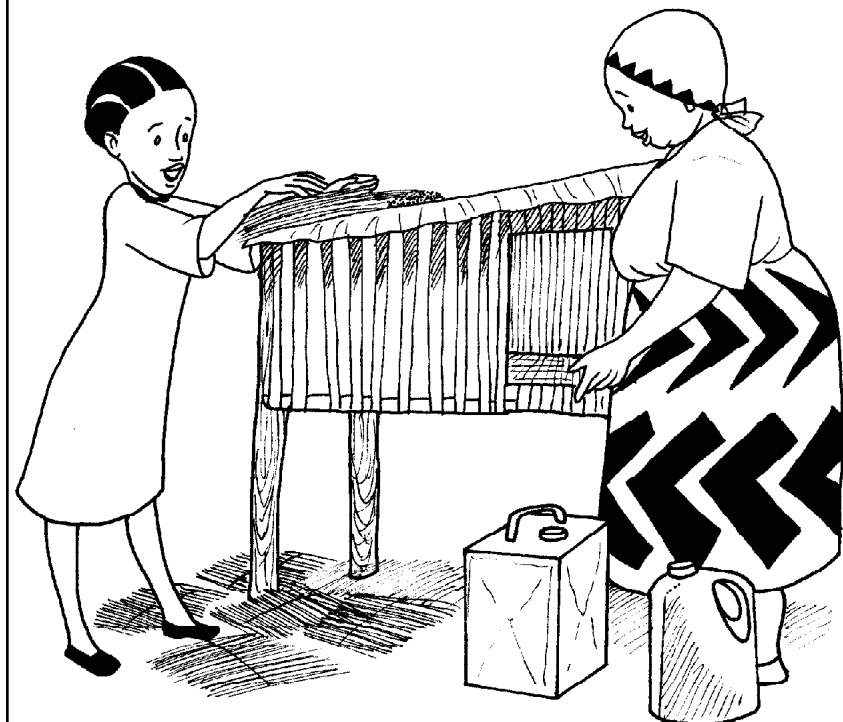
The roof needs to keep the rain out so I am going to use this plastic sheet and cover it with grass thatch.

That will keep the inside nice and dry.

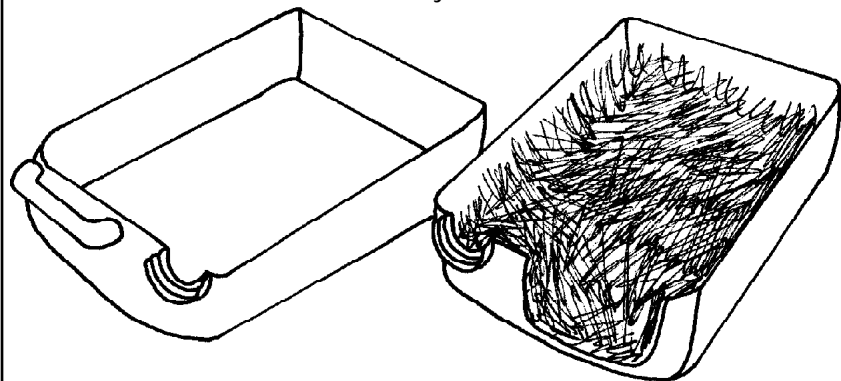


And since the cage is under the tree, it is out of the worst rain.

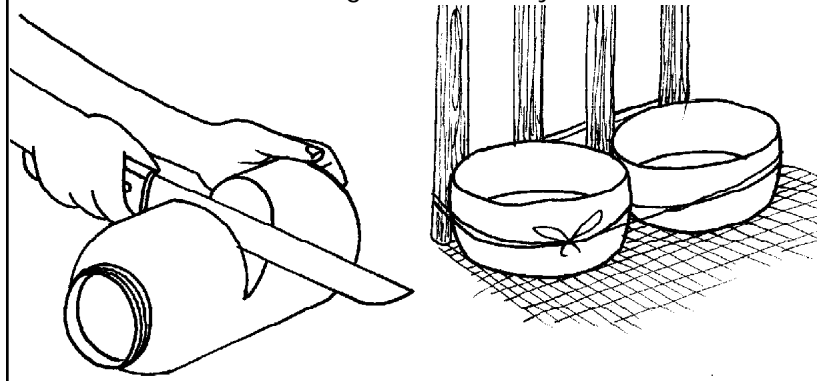
Could you use these debes for food or water?



Yes! These old debes will make great nesting boxes if I cut them down and fill them with dry grass and leaves. The door needs to be low enough for the babies to get back into the nest if they fall out!



These old tins and plastic jars will be good for food and water and if I make sure that I don't leave any sharp edges when I cut them. If I loop some string round, I can tie them to the cage so that they don't fall over.



The cage is complete, where are you going?

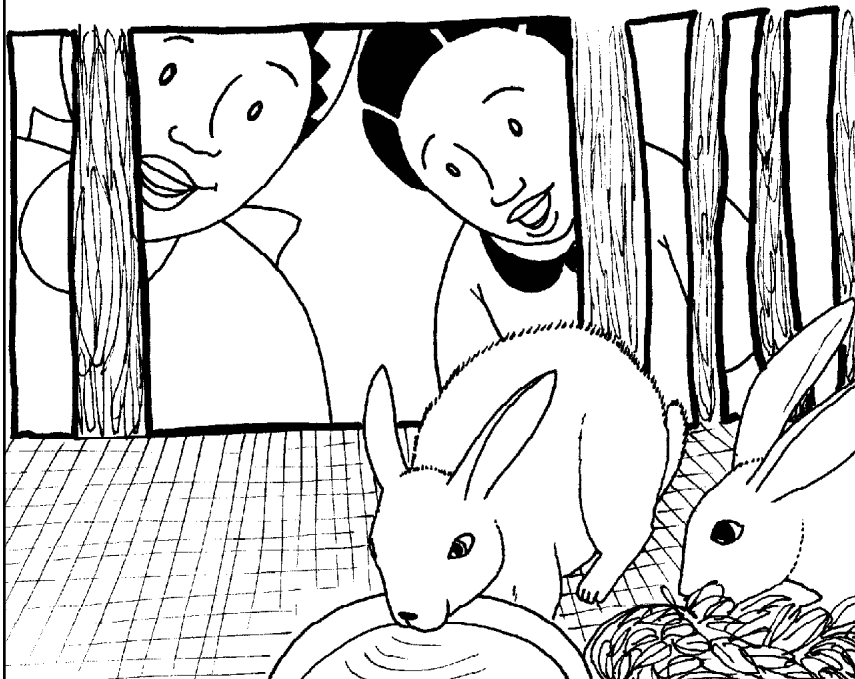


To bring the rabbits of course.



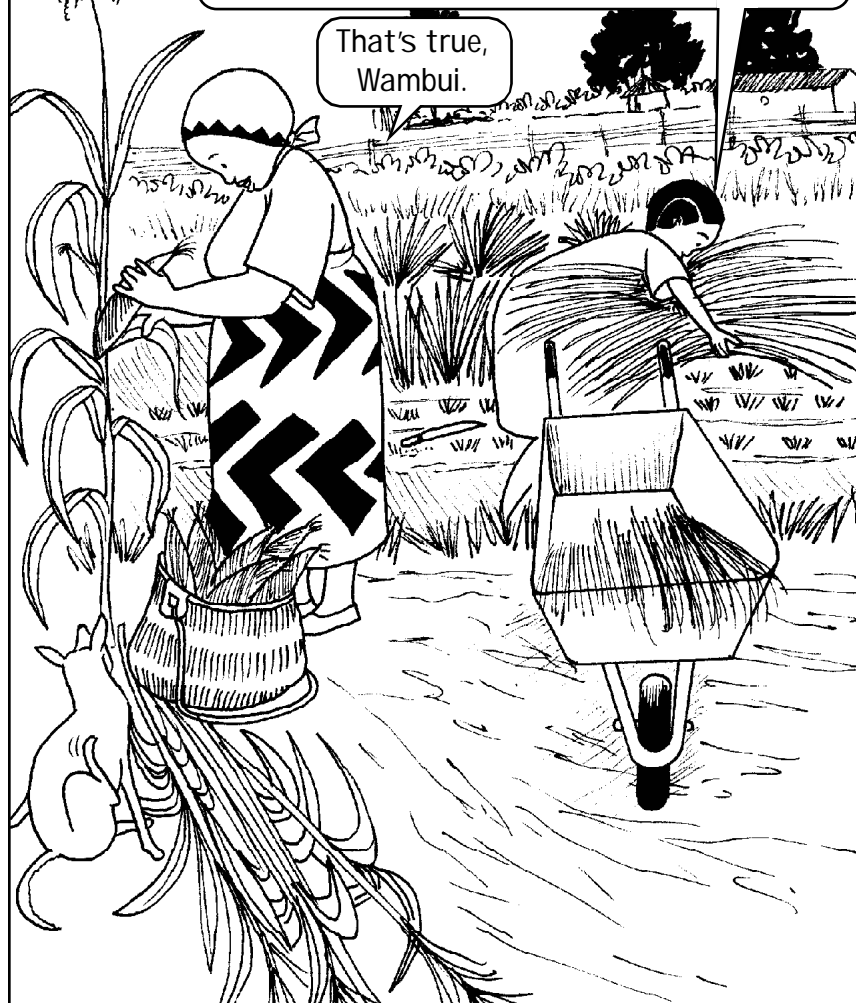
SOON

These young does have just been taken away from their mother so it will be another two months before they are old enough for me to introduce them to Njuguna's buck. But that will give me time to get used to looking after them.



Its amazing what these rabbits will eat! There is so much good rabbit food on the shamba and some of it we were not using before!

That's true, Wambui.



The rabbits only take a little of all the food that we chop for the cow. There are weeds from the shamba, leaves from the mugumo tree, mulberry leaves, mango leaves...

Maize stalks, sweet potato vines, and there is always grass! I just take anything green, chop it and put it in the cage.



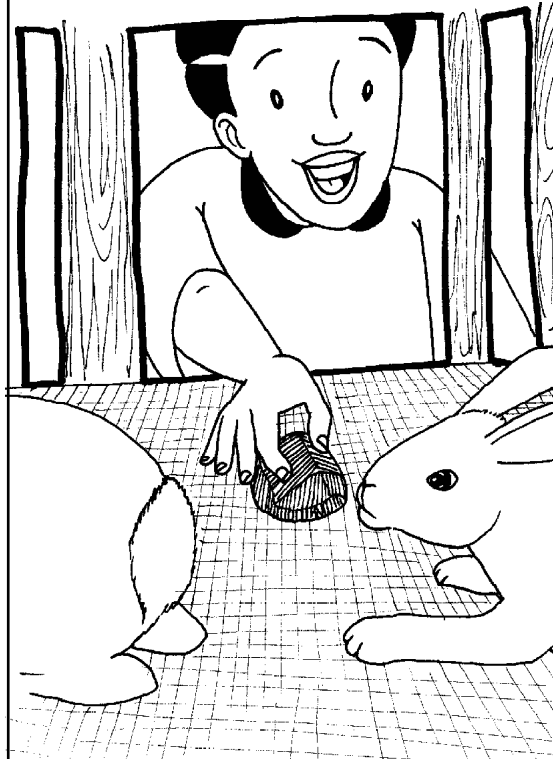
If the rabbits don't like it they leave it and it is composted with the rabbit droppings and the cow manure.



And now that they are mated and going to have babies, I sneak a little of hen's food...



...And a little of the cow's salt lick from time to time...



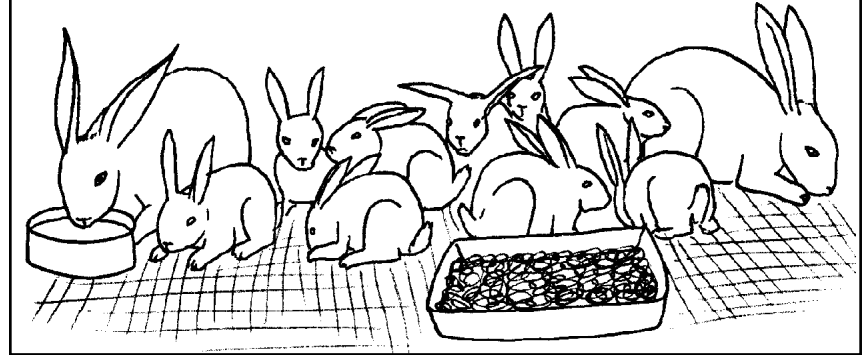
...After school I remove the old food from the cage and put in the fresh stuff. Rabbits eat mainly at night so they get the food while it's still fresh.



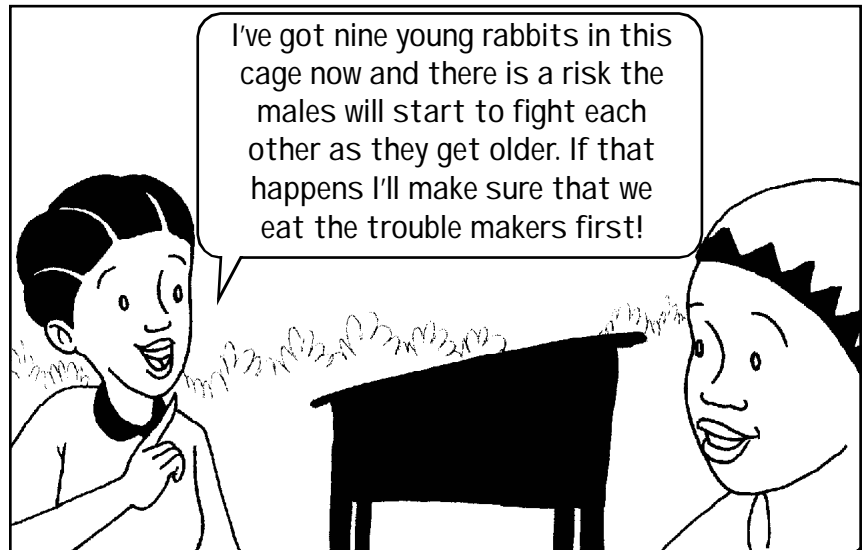
While am cleaning out the old food, I brush out the droppings and replace the water. You can use the droppings as fertilizer on the plants straight away, although I add them to the compost heap.



The baby rabbits are now six weeks old, so it is time to wean them. Next week I'll get Njuguna's buck and mate the two does again, that way I should be able to get four litters a year.



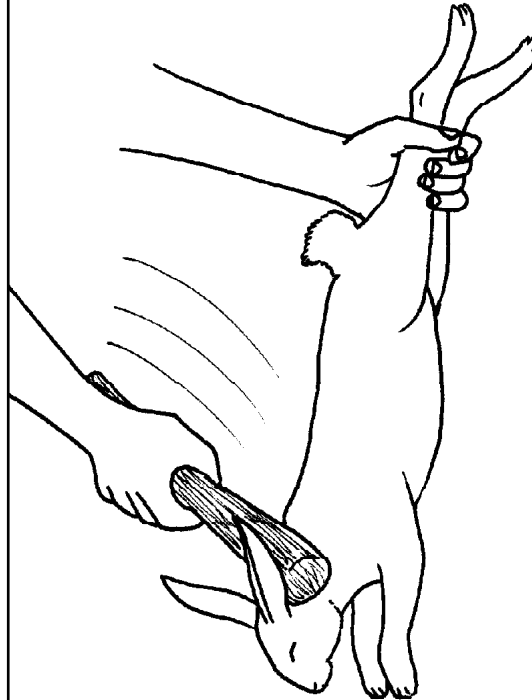
I've got nine young rabbits in this cage now and there is a risk the males will start to fight each other as they get older. If that happens I'll make sure that we eat the trouble makers first!



Mother invites uncle Silas on Saturday.



It's important that the rabbit is not frightened or else the meat will not be as good. See how I hold the rabbit and hit it hard on the back of the head with a heavy stick.



I then cut it's throat and hang it up by the back legs to let the blood drain out.



Some weeks later

Well, Wambui how will we cook the rabbit this week? Fried? Stewed? Roasted? Rabbit soup...? I am amazed how good it is with whatever is ready in the shamba.

Mmm! My favourite was the time you fried it with a little honey and we had it with sukuma wiki and ugali!



We've had so many good meals from these rabbits, we never had meat so often before.

And it is all coming from plants that were already on the shamba.



Illustrations by: Joseph Kariuki
Technical content and storyline: Robbie Bain and Jon Tanner
Design by: Development Communications Ltd, Nairobi, Kenya
Funded by: DFID Livestock Production Programme
Published by: Need to Know Ltd, Croy, Inverness, IV25PG, UK

This publication is an output from the Livestock Production Programme of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID or the Livestock Production Programme.