FARM ECONOMICS

Roadrunner Farming in Zimbabwe: Is It Really Profitable? The Science and Economics Explained

Roadrunners fetch good prices, but are they really profitable? We explore the science, feeding costs and surprising economics of raising them in Zimbabwe.

By FeedSport Nutrition Team · Published 24 October 2026 · Updated 29 October 2026 · 25 min read

KEY POINTS

- A yard can only feed so many scavenging birds. Once the flock outgrows it, and especially in the dry season, the gap has to be bought in bags.
- "Roadrunner" can mean a slow indigenous village chicken or an improved breed such as Boschveld or Koekoek. Improved birds only grow faster if they are properly fed.
- In the illustrative 100-bird model, each bird sold eats about 7 kg of feed over 16 weeks, and feed is about 64% of the cash cost.
- Selling direct at US$9 a bird leaves a net profit of about US$31 a batch; selling to traders at US$7 turns it into a loss. Four extra weeks of slow growth costs more than that.
- Broilers earn more from the same fowl run over a year on these assumptions, but need far more birds sold. Whatever you rear, prove the market before scaling up.

Picture a homestead somewhere in Murehwa, or Gutu, or Lupane. There are about fifteen roadrunners around the yard. In the morning they leave the fowl run and disappear into the edges of the maize field, under the mango tree, behind the kitchen hut. They scratch through leaf litter for termites, pick at grass seeds, chase grasshoppers and clean up whatever falls from the plates after sadza. In the evening someone throws them a handful or two of maize, and they go back to roost.

Ask the owner what those chickens cost to keep and the honest answer is usually, "Almost nothing." When visitors come, a cockerel is caught. When school fees are due, two or three birds go to a neighbour or to a buyer at the business centre for a good price. Roadrunners, everyone agrees, are tough, tasty and cheap to raise.

Then the family starts thinking bigger. If fifteen birds can bring in a bit of money, why not fifty? Why not a hundred? A cousin in town says people in Harare pay well for roadrunners. Someone on WhatsApp is

selling improved roadrunner chicks. Before long, the plan is three hundred birds.

This article is about what happens between fifteen birds and three hundred, because something important changes along the way, and it is not always obvious until the feed bills start arriving.

The yard did not grow with the flock

Here is the simple problem. When the flock went from fifteen to three hundred, the homestead stayed the same size. The same patch of veld, the same field edges, the same kitchen. The termites did not multiply by twenty. The grass did not produce twenty times more seed. The family did not start cooking twenty times more food and throwing the leftovers outside.

So three hundred chickens are now competing for roughly the food that fifteen chickens used to share. For a while the birds can cope, because the yard probably had a bit of spare food that the small flock was not using. But at some point the land simply cannot feed them all. The birds start growing slower, laying fewer eggs, looking thinner, and the farmer notices that they come home hungrier. Without really making a decision, the farmer begins buying more and more feed.

Ecologists have a name for this idea: **carrying capacity**. It means the number of animals a piece of land can support using only what is naturally available on it. Poultry researchers working with village chickens talk about the scavengeable feed resource base, which is the total amount of food in and around a homestead that chickens can find for themselves: insects, worms, seeds, green leaves, spilled grain and household waste. [2, 4] When the flock is small relative to that resource base, the birds largely feed themselves. When the flock grows beyond it, the gap has to be filled from a bag.

People often ask, "How many roadrunners can I keep before I need to buy feed?" The honest answer is that there is no fixed number. It depends on how much land the birds can roam, the time of year, how good the rains were, what crops are grown nearby, how many other households' chickens are using the same area, the breed, and how the birds are managed. A homestead next to a grain-processing area after harvest can carry far more birds than the same homestead in October, when the veld is bare and the granary is nearly empty.

That seasonal swing matters a lot in Zimbabwe. In the rainy months, roughly November to March, there are insects everywhere and green feed is plentiful, so scavenged protein is relatively easy to find. After harvest, from about April to June, there is spilled grain and crop residue. But in the hot dry months before the rains, scavenged food becomes scarce and especially short of protein. Reviews of village chicken production in Zimbabwe and the region consistently identify poor and seasonal nutrition, together with Newcastle disease and predators, as major reasons village flocks stay small and productivity stays low. [2, 5]

Finding food is not the same as eating well

There is a second point that small-flock owners sometimes miss. Even fifteen roadrunners that look busy and healthy are not necessarily well fed. A chicken can fill its crop and still be short of protein, calcium or certain vitamins.

Studies of village chickens in Zimbabwe show this in their production figures. Indigenous hens under scavenging conditions typically lay small clutches a few times a year, and growth to slaughter weight takes many months, with high chick losses. [5, 6] Part of that is genetics and part of that is disease, but nutrition is a big part of it. So when we say scavenging is "free", what we often mean is that we are accepting slow growth and low output in exchange for not paying for feed. That is a perfectly sensible trade-off for a household flock. It is a much harder trade-off to make in a business.

Which brings us to the question that runs through the rest of this article:

If a farmer has to buy most of the feed, is raising roadrunners still profitable?

First, what exactly is a "roadrunner"?

In Zimbabwe, "roadrunner" is used loosely, and that causes real confusion when people compare costs and profits.

Sometimes it means the **indigenous village chicken**: the mixed-colour birds that have lived on Zimbabwean homesteads for generations. They are hardy, good mothers, and well adapted to scavenging, heat and rough conditions. But they are small and slow. Mature hens commonly weigh somewhere around 1.2 to 1.8 kg and cocks a bit more, and under scavenging they can take five to six months or longer to reach a size people want to buy.

Other times, "roadrunner" means an **improved or dual-purpose breed** that is sold as a roadrunner because it looks like one and can range outdoors. Common names in the region include the **Boschveld** (developed in South Africa from indigenous Venda, Matabele and Ovambo-type chickens), the **Potchefstroom Koekoek** (a South African dual-purpose breed with the barred black-and-white pattern), and the **Black Australorp**, plus various hatchery crosses. These birds grow faster and get heavier than indigenous chickens, and the hens lay considerably more eggs when well fed. South African work comparing indigenous and developed breeds under controlled conditions found large differences in egg output between them. [3] The catch is that improved birds only show that potential if they are fed properly. A Boschveld left to scavenge on a crowded yard in the dry season will not perform much better than a village chicken, and may cope worse.

So when someone says roadrunners reach market at four months, ask: which roadrunner, and fed on what? The rest of this article mainly models an **improved roadrunner on bought feed**, because that is what most people mean when they talk about roadrunner farming as a business. We come back to indigenous birds later.

What a roadrunner actually needs to eat

A chicken's body does not care whether its food came from a termite mound or a bag. It needs the same things either way: **energy** to stay alive, move and stay warm; **protein**, or more precisely the right **amino acids** like lysine and methionine, to build muscle and feathers; **minerals** such as calcium and phosphorus for bones and eggshells; and **vitamins** for health and immunity.

Young chicks need the most concentrated diet, especially protein, because they are growing quickly relative to their size. As birds get older, their protein needs as a share of the diet fall, but they eat more food in total. Laying hens need a lot of extra calcium. These general patterns are well established in poultry science, [7] though exact requirements for local roadrunner types are less well documented than for commercial broilers and layers.

What happens if you feed them only maize? Maize is a good energy source, but it is low in protein (often around 8 to 9 percent) and particularly short of lysine, and it has very little calcium. A growing chick needs a diet much richer in protein than that. Birds on mostly maize will survive and may look fine, but they grow slowly, feather poorly and take far longer to reach selling weight. In other words, the cheap feed often turns out to be expensive, because you are paying to keep the bird alive for extra weeks.

Kitchen scraps and homemade mixtures can help, but there is no guarantee that a mixture is balanced just because it contains several ingredients. Can you reduce costs by mixing your own feed? Sometimes, yes, especially if you grow some of the ingredients, can buy protein sources like soya cake at a fair price, and use a proper premix. But home-mixing only saves money if the final diet actually supports good growth. A mix that is $5 cheaper per bag but adds three weeks to the growing period has probably cost you money. Our guides to mixing your own feed on the farm and reading an ingredient specification go into ingredient choices in more detail.

Thinking of mixing your own roadrunner feed?

Tell us the ingredients you can get, what you pay for them and the age of your birds. Our nutrition team will help you balance a starter and grower ration that keeps your roadrunners growing, and source the soya meal, amino acids and premix.

Balance my roadrunner feed

The hidden cost of slow growth

This is the part that surprises many farmers.

Every day a chicken is alive, it uses part of its feed just to keep its body running: breathing, walking, keeping warm, fighting off disease. Nutritionists call this **maintenance**. Only the feed eaten above maintenance goes into growth. A fast-growing bird spends fewer days on the farm, so less of its total feed goes to maintenance and more goes to meat. A slow-growing bird pays that daily "rent" for many more weeks.

Think of it like a kombi on a long route. The fuel spent idling in traffic does not move passengers any closer to town. A broiler is a kombi on an empty highway. A roadrunner on a mediocre diet is stuck in traffic in town at 5 pm.

Commercial broilers like the Ross 308 are bred to reach well over 2 kg in about five to six weeks, using somewhere around 1.6 to 1.8 kg of feed per kg of live weight under good conditions. [1] An improved roadrunner fed well might take around 14 to 18 weeks to reach a similar or slightly lower weight, and will use roughly twice as much feed per kilogram of live weight, or more. Indigenous birds kept intensively can take even longer and use more still.

Slow growth also ties up other things: the fowl run is occupied longer, someone has to feed and water the birds every day for months, and your money is sitting in the flock instead of earning anything. None of this automatically makes roadrunners unprofitable. Roadrunners usually sell for a much higher price per bird and per kilogram than broilers. The question is whether that premium is big enough to cover the extra weeks. Our guide to feed cost per kilogram of gain shows how to measure this on your own farm.

So let's do the arithmetic.

Modelling a flock of 100 improved roadrunners

Please read this carefully before using the numbers. The figures below are planning assumptions meant to show how the economics work. They are in the general range of prices seen in Zimbabwe in recent years, but prices change often and vary by town. Before making any decision, replace them with prices you have confirmed from your own suppliers and buyers. The tables are built so you can do that easily.

The assumptions

Item	Assumption	Notes
Birds placed	100 day-old improved roadrunner chicks	Mixed sex
Chick price	US$1.20 each	Assumption. Check with your hatchery
Growing period	16 weeks to sale	Plus about 3 weeks to clean and prepare the run between batches
Mortality	10% (5 birds in first 3 weeks, 5 around week 6–8)	90 birds sold
Average live weight at sale	About 1.9 kg	Depends heavily on breed and feed
Feed per surviving bird	7.0 kg (1.2 kg starter + 5.8 kg grower)	Includes modest wastage. Gives a feed conversion ratio of about 3.7
Feed eaten by birds that died	Early deaths about 0.2 kg each; later deaths about 2 kg each	Dead birds still ate feed you paid for
Starter feed price	US$0.68/kg (≈ $34 per 50 kg bag)	Assumption
Grower feed price	US$0.60/kg (≈ $30 per 50 kg bag)	Assumption
Selling price	US$9.00 per bird sold direct to consumers; US$7.00 per bird to traders	Assumption. Check your local market

Total feed comes to about **641 kg**: 115 kg of starter and 526 kg of grower. That is about 13 bags for 100

chicks placed. So, how much feed does a roadrunner eat before sale? On this model, about 7 kg per bird that makes it to market, or roughly a 50 kg bag for every seven birds. Your own figure could easily be 6 kg or 9 kg depending on breed, feed quality and how long you keep them.

Costs for one batch

Cost item	Calculation	US$
Chicks	100 × $1.20	120.00
Starter feed	115 kg × $0.68	78.20
Grower feed	526 kg × $0.60	315.60
Vaccines and medicines	Newcastle, Gumboro, fowl pox, vitamins, dewormer (allowance)	30.00
Brooding heat, bedding, disinfectant, water	Allowance	50.00
Transport and selling costs	Allowance	20.00
Total cash cost		**613.80**
Labour	About a quarter of a $120/month worker's time for about 3.7 months	111.00
Housing	$600 fowl run lasting 10 years, share for this batch	25.00
Equipment	$100 feeders, drinkers and brooder lasting 5 years, share	9.00
Cost of money tied up	10% a year on cash invested, about 4 months	20.00
Total economic cost		**778.80**

Notice that feed is about **64% of the cash cost**. That is typical of poultry and it is why feed price and feed efficiency matter so much.

Why separate cash cost from economic cost? Because many family farms do not pay anyone wages and already have a fowl run. That money does not leave your pocket, so the cash picture looks better. But your time and your building are not free. If you could earn money doing something else with that time, or the building will eventually need replacing, a business that only covers cash costs is really paying you nothing for your labour.

Revenue and profit

	Selling direct at $9.00	Selling to traders at $7.00
Birds sold	90	90
Revenue	$810.00	$630.00
Cash margin (revenue – cash cost)	**+$196.20**	**+$16.20**
Net profit (revenue – economic cost)	**+$31.20**	**–$148.80**
Break-even price, cash costs only	$6.82 per bird	$6.82 per bird

	Selling direct at $9.00	Selling to traders at $7.00
Break-even price, all costs	$8.65 per bird	$8.65 per bird

So, are roadrunners still profitable if you have to buy commercial feed? On these assumptions, **yes, but only just, and only if you can sell directly at a good price.** At $9 a bird, the family puts about $196 in its pocket over four months, which is a reasonable return on $614 of cash, but almost all of it is really payment for the family's own labour. Sell the same birds to a trader at $7 and the cash margin almost disappears.

That gap between $9 and $7 is not small talk. It is the difference between a business and a hobby.

Run this budget with your own prices

Send us your chick price, the feed you use and what your buyers pay. We will price the feed for a batch at today's rates and work out your break-even price per bird.

Cost my roadrunner batch

What moves the profit the most?

Let's take the $9 direct-sale case as the starting point (net profit +$31.20) and change one thing at a time.

Scenario	What changes	Net profit
Base case	As above	**+$31.20**
Feed prices rise 20%	Feed bill rises by about $79	**–$47.56**
Selling price falls to $8.00	Revenue drops $90	**–$58.80**
Mortality rises to 20%	80 birds sold; about 45 kg less feed eaten	**–$31.80**
Birds take 20 weeks instead of 16 (same price)	About 227 kg extra feed, 4 more weeks of labour and housing	**–$143.00**
Selling price rises to $10.00	Revenue rises $90	**+$121.20**
Good scavenging genuinely replaces 20% of grower feed, with no slowdown in growth	Grower bill falls about $63	**+$94.32**

Three lessons stand out.

First, **selling price and feed price dominate everything**. A one-dollar change in the price per bird swings profit by $90. A 20% feed price increase wipes out the profit entirely. Roadrunner farmers should watch both like hawks.

Second, **slow growth is the quiet killer**. Four extra weeks, which is very easy to lose through a poor diet, disease or a weaker strain of chick, turns a small profit into a large loss, because the birds keep eating while they are not getting much heavier. This is the hidden cost of slow growth in real money.

Third, **scavenging can still help a lot, but only if it is real**. If your birds genuinely find a fifth of their food outside without growing more slowly, profit roughly triples. That is the strength of semi-intensive systems. But be honest with yourself here. On an overcrowded yard in September, the birds may be walking around more and finding very little, using energy rather than gaining it, and exposed to hawks, dogs and disease from neighbouring flocks.

Roadrunners taking too long to reach selling weight?

Send us a few sample weights, the age of the birds, the feed they are on and how much they have eaten so far. We will help you find out whether the diet is holding them back.

Check my flock's growth

What about indigenous birds on bought feed?

Indigenous village chickens are wonderful for low-input household production. They are hardy, they brood their own chicks, and they make the most of scavenging. But on fully purchased feed the numbers are harder. If an indigenous bird takes 20 to 24 weeks to reach about 1.3 to 1.5 kg and needs perhaps 8 kg or more of feed to get there (a rough illustration, as reliable intensive-feeding data for Zimbabwean village chickens is limited), the feed alone could cost around $5 per bird before you count chicks, losses and vaccines. Unless buyers will pay a clear premium for "true" village chickens, and some will, it is difficult to make intensive indigenous production pay.

Are improved roadrunner breeds more profitable than indigenous birds? When most feed is bought, the improved breeds usually have the advantage because they turn feed into meat faster. When most feed is scavenged and inputs are minimal, indigenous birds often do better because they need less care and survive harsh conditions. The best bird depends on the system you can actually run.

Roadrunners versus broilers: a fair comparison

Many farmers weighing roadrunner farming are also thinking about broilers. Comparing profit per bird is misleading, because a broiler is gone in six weeks while a roadrunner is still a teenager. So let's compare the two businesses using the same 100-bird fowl run over a year.

Broiler assumptions (100 birds)

Day-old chicks at **$0.85** each (assumption), **5%** mortality (95 sold), about **4.0 kg** of feed per surviving bird to reach around **2.2 kg** live at **6 weeks**, starter at **$0.70/kg** and finisher at **$0.64/kg** (assumptions).

For selling, we use the two routes most Zimbabwean broiler farmers actually rely on. **Live birds currently fetch about $6 each.** Alternatively, farmers slaughter and sell **dressed birds to butcheries at roughly $3.00 to $3.50 per kg**, depending on the butcher (market prices reported to FeedSport, October 2026). A 2.2 kg live broiler gives a dressed carcass of about **1.6 kg** (roughly 73% dressing, an assumption), so a dressed bird earns about **$4.80 to $5.60**. Dressing also costs something: we allow **$0.25 per bird** for slaughter labour, water, packaging and transport to the butchery (assumption).

	Roadrunners (100)	Broilers (100)
Growing period	16 weeks	6 weeks
Batches per year (incl. cleaning time)	About 2.7	About 6
Birds sold per batch	90	95
Live weight at sale	About 1.9 kg	About 2.2 kg
Feed per kg live weight (FCR)	About 3.7	About 1.8
Cash cost per batch (sold live)	$613.80	$412.40
Economic cost per batch (sold live)	$778.80	$473.40
Selling price, live	$9.00 (≈ $4.74/kg live)	$6.00 (≈ $2.73/kg live)
Cash margin per batch, live	$196.20	$157.60
Net profit per batch, live	$31.20	$96.60
Cash margin per year, live	**≈ $530**	**≈ $946**
Net profit per year, live	**≈ $84**	**≈ $580**
Birds you must sell per year	≈ 243	≈ 570

Broiler cash cost: chicks $85, feed $252.40 (385 kg), vaccines $15, brooding and bedding $40, transport $20. Economic extras: labour $42, housing $9, equipment $3, money tied up $7. Roadrunner figures are the direct-sale case from the 100-bird model.

What if the broiler farmer dresses the birds and sells to a butchery instead?

Dressing gives the farmer a second product. Besides the carcass, butcheries buy the **intestines, gizzard, liver and dressed head at about $2 per kg** (market price reported to FeedSport, October 2026). We assume these together come to about **0.25 kg per bird** (assumption; actual yield depends on bird size and how the parts are cleaned and trimmed), which adds about **$0.50 per bird**, or $47.50 for a batch of 95.

Broilers sold dressed to butcheries (100 placed, 95 sold, about 152 kg carcass + about 24 kg offal)	At $3.00/kg	At $3.50/kg
Carcass revenue per bird	$4.80	$5.60
Offal and head revenue per bird	$0.50	$0.50
Total revenue per batch	$503.50	$579.50
Cash cost incl. $23.75 dressing	$436.15	$436.15
Cash margin per batch	+$67.35	+$143.35
Net profit per batch (economic cost $497.15)	**+$6.35**	**+$82.35**
Net profit per year (6 batches)	≈ +$38	≈ +$494
Break-even carcass price, all costs (after offal income)	$2.96/kg	$2.96/kg

Leaving the offal out of the calculation would make dressing look like a losing option at the lower butchery price. That's why it matters. Once it's counted, dressing roughly breaks even at $3.00/kg and makes a reasonable profit at $3.50/kg.

At current prices, selling live at $6 is still slightly ahead. After dressing costs and offal income, a dressed bird nets about $5.05 at $3.00/kg and about $5.85 at $3.50/kg, compared with $6 for a live bird. The two routes become equal at a carcass price of about **$3.59/kg**, or sooner if the birds are heavier than 2.2 kg. Dressing still has a place: butcheries can take large numbers at once and pay predictably, which helps when live buyers dry up at month-end or a batch is ready all on the same day.

On these assumptions, broilers earn more from the same building over a year, mainly because the money and the fowl run turn over six times instead of under three. The roadrunner's higher price per kilogram, about 1.7 times the broiler live price, is not enough to make up for the extra weeks of feed and the slower turnover.

But look at the bottom rows before deciding. To earn that broiler profit, you have to sell about 570 birds a year at a good direct price, competing with large commercial producers and supermarkets. The roadrunner farmer needs to sell only about 243 birds, into a market where buyers are often willing to pay a premium and where there is less competition from big companies. Broilers are also less forgiving. They need good brooding, reliable feed and water every single day, and they can die quickly in heat. And notice how quickly profit disappears in both businesses when the selling channel pays less: roadrunners sold to traders at $7 lose money, and broilers dressed for a butchery at $3.00/kg only just break even, even after selling the offal. In both cases, the way you sell matters as much as the way you rear.

So roadrunners can make sense when you have a reliable premium market, some genuine scavenging to reduce feed costs, limited ability to manage intensive broiler cycles, or a preference for a hardier bird. Broilers tend to win when you have a good, steady market for volume, cheap and reliable access to feed and chicks, and the skills to run tight six-week cycles.

Is the demand really there?

Many people say demand for roadrunners in Zimbabwe is growing, and there are signs of it: roadrunners are widely sold at markets and roadside, they appear on restaurant menus, and urban buyers often say they prefer the firmer texture and stronger flavour, along with the feeling that the birds are more natural. These preferences are real and they are the reason for the price premium.

But we should be careful. We could not find reliable national figures showing how fast roadrunner demand is growing, how many birds are sold, or how prices have moved over time. Social media attention is not the same as a steady market. And it is worth separating taste from science: consumers may prefer roadrunner meat, but claims that it is significantly healthier than other chicken are not well established by research.

The most important market question for a growing farm is this: **can you sell 90 birds at the same price you got for 5?** Selling five birds to neighbours and colleagues at $10 each is easy. Selling 90 every four months, or 270 if you grow to 300 birds, often means going to traders, restaurants or butcheries who will want a lower price, consistent sizes, and sometimes dressed birds with proper hygiene. Is it better to sell live birds or dressed chickens? Dressed birds can earn more and reach restaurants and town customers, but they bring slaughter labour, cold storage, packaging and health regulations. Live birds are simpler and are what most local buyers expect. Many farmers do both: live to local buyers, dressed to selected town customers.

Why 20 birds can make money and 300 can struggle

Let's go back to that 300-bird plan with our numbers.

At 300 birds the family can no longer manage alongside other chores, so they hire a worker for about four months, roughly $444. They need a bigger run, perhaps $1,500. They may get about 5% off feed by buying in bulk. Most importantly, they cannot sell all 270 birds directly. Say 100 go directly at $9 and 170 go to traders and restaurants at $7.50, for an average of about $8.06.

300-bird batch	US$
Cash costs (chicks, feed with 5% bulk discount, vet, brooding, transport)	1,767
Hired labour	444
Housing, equipment and money tied up	134
Total economic cost	**2,345**
Revenue (100 × $9 + 170 × $7.50)	2,175
Cash margin before hired labour	**+408**
Net profit after all costs	**−170**

Even with the bulk discount, the farm loses money once the worker is paid, mainly because the average selling price dropped and a wage replaced free family labour. If the family does the work themselves, the business makes about $274 per batch, which is decent, but really that is the family's wage for four months of

work.

This is the heart of it. A farmer with 20 birds makes money because the land feeds most of them, the family's spare time looks after them, and every bird sells at the best price to people they know. A farmer with 300 has to pay for almost all of the feed, may have to pay for labour and housing, and must sell to buyers who pay less. The birds are the same. The business is completely different.

Is there an optimal flock size? Not one that fits everyone. Bigger farms can gain from bulk buying, better equipment, and spreading fixed costs, and some Zimbabwean farmers clearly do run larger roadrunner operations profitably. But they usually have a planned market, good feeding and health management, and a breed that grows well. To find a size that suits you, ask four questions. How many birds can my land genuinely feed in the dry season, not the rainy season? How many can I sell at a good price, honestly, every batch? Who will do the daily work, and what does that time cost? And how much money can I afford to have tied up for four or five months? Start below the smallest of those four answers and grow once you have proved the market.

Back to the homestead

Remember the family with fifteen roadrunners under the mango tree. Those birds really were cheap to keep, because the yard was feeding them. When the flock grew, the family gradually took over that job, one bag of feed at a time.

That is not a reason to give up. It just means the business has to be judged differently. A backyard flock is measured by what the land provides. A commercial flock is measured by feed cost, growth, mortality, selling price and whether there are buyers for every bird.

Roadrunner farming in Zimbabwe can be profitable. It is most likely to work when the birds are a breed that responds to good feed, the diet is balanced enough that they reach market weight without extra weeks, losses are kept low with vaccination and good housing, any scavenging is real rather than imagined, and, above all, the farmer has buyers lined up who will pay a premium price for the whole batch. When one of those pieces is missing, the margins are thin enough that the business can quietly turn into a loss.

So before buying 300 chicks, sit down with a pen, put in your own prices for chicks, feed and selling, and work through the tables above. Then sell your first batch of 50 or 100 before planning the next. The land will tell you how many birds it can feed, and the market will tell you how many it can buy.

If you want to understand roadrunner feed in Zimbabwe more deeply, including what goes into a balanced grower diet and when mixing your own makes sense, the FeedSport Knowledge Centre has more articles on feed ingredients and formulation, including the maths behind a balanced feed.

Planning to grow your roadrunner flock? Talk to FeedSport

Before you buy more chicks, let us go through your numbers with you: how much feed the next batch will need, what it will cost, and the selling price you need to make it pay.

WhatsApp the team | Other ways to contact us

Notes, figures and sources

Broiler selling prices are market prices reported to FeedSport by farmers in October 2026: about $6 a bird live, $3.00 to $3.50 per kg dressed to butcheries, and about $2 per kg for the intestines, gizzard, liver and dressed head. The 73% dressing percentage, the 0.25 kg of offal and head per bird and the $0.25-a-bird dressing cost are assumptions, worth checking against actual butchery weigh slips. All other prices are planning assumptions, not supplier quotations. Check them against current prices from your feed supplier, hatchery and buyers before relying on them. Growth and feed figures for improved roadrunner strains under Zimbabwean conditions are poorly documented, so the 7 kg of feed and 1.9 kg at 16 weeks are modelling assumptions, and the indigenous-bird example is a rough illustration only. The scavenging scenario is illustrative: how much feed birds really find depends on the land, the season and the size of the flock.

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Need a diet checked? Send your ingredients and targets to the FeedSport nutrition team on WhatsApp +263 77 468 4534 or sales@feedsport.co.zw.

Figures in this guide are typical values and general ranges. Confirm targets for your animals, genetics and ingredients, and check batch specifications before formulating.