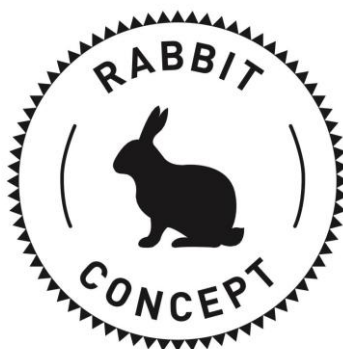


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| RAABIT ANIMAL WELFARE PROGRAMME<br>RABBIT CONCEPT | Done        | 26-09-25 |
|   | Modified    | 06-11-25 |
|   | Revision N° | 2        |

The following programme describes the minimum requirements for meat rabbit rearing in order to fulfil the enhanced welfare standard of "Rabbit Concept". Animals must be kept under these minimum conditions at all times from weaning until transport to the slaughterhouse. Participating farms commit to put them in practice and are audited on an annual basis by an independent certification body for compliance. Guidelines for non-compliance cases are described in a separate document.

**General Objective:** to offer products containing rabbit meat from animals that have been grown freely without restrictions to their natural behaviour and movements, thus reducing the need for antibiotics and delivering higher feed-meat conversion ratios compared to conventional commercial rabbit breeding.

Logo used: Rabbit Concept



### **1. Approval**

Each farm must be duly registered and approved as such.

### **2. Farm Management and Access**

People in charge of farm management and animal handling must demonstrate knowledge and skills regarding animal health, welfare and breeding and husbandry of rabbits.

Access to the farm premises is always controlled and only for authorized persons. Precautions against unauthorized access are applied. A visitor record must be kept.

All buildings and constructions must be well maintained and kept clean. Smoking is prohibited in premises where rabbits are kept.

Admittance to the livestock buildings is only allowed through a fully equipped hygiene sluice (washbasin, soap, disposable towels and footwear disinfection). Visitors must wear hygienic clothing and employees must wear hygienic work clothes.

### **3. Housing**

The enclosure systems are designed in a way that they do not compromise the rabbits' health and allow them to exhibit their typical behaviour. Dominance fights and chasing of individual rabbits are thus prevented. No wire mesh floor must be used as comfortable flooring prevents pain and discomfort.

The premises also protect them from the weather and prevent the introduction of pests as much as possible.

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Rabbits must be able to perform at least 2 consecutive hops and stand up fully stretched. For this the pen must be at least 1.8m long and have open tops.

Rabbits must also have access to open air fields which cover at least 50% of the area (see Point 6).

#### 4. Space Requirements

Rabbits are active animals that need sufficient space to hop, run, crawl, jump and turn around. They have high motivation for locomotion when given enough space and their play behaviour is particularly important. The housing facilities should have a maximum stocking density of 20Kg/m<sup>2</sup>. The usable floor space (unobstructed area) must comply with the following cumulative requirements

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| First 4 animals:                                      | 3000 cm <sup>2</sup> /animal |
| Between 5 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> animal:  | 2000 cm <sup>2</sup> /animal |
| Between 11 <sup>th</sup> and 24 <sup>th</sup> animal: | 1700 cm <sup>2</sup> /animal |
| As from 25 <sup>th</sup> animal:                      | 1400 cm <sup>2</sup> /animal |

#### 5. Environmental Enrichment

Rabbits enjoy varied, stimulating surroundings to stay occupied and stress less. They benefit from different levels in housing such as platforms. Access to platforms makes them more active which has a positive effect on bone strength. Hiding places also allow rabbits to escape when desired and feel safe and rested. For this reason the pen must contain a platform where the rabbit can sit and shelter under. There must be enough elevated platforms with at least 300cm<sup>2</sup>/animal evenly spread over the minimum area. The minimum platform height should be of 27cm. Platforms can take up to a maximum of 40% of the unobstructed floor area. Other suitable hiding places like tubes and caves must also be available.

Rabbits must have constant access to coarsely structured roughage/hay cobs and suitable gnawing material. Such provision of fibre and gnawing material allows the animals to stay calm whilst enjoying good digestive and oral health respectively.

#### 6. Outdoor Access

From age 35 days rabbits are transferred to free raising areas, where they have constant access to outdoor areas. This enables the animals to graze. The requirements for grazing area are 10Kg/m<sup>2</sup> and 2m<sup>2</sup> green run/animal. Animals must be kept in these stables including indoor and outdoor areas until they become fully grown and ready for slaughter. The lock gate is kept open at all times.

#### 7. Social Behaviour

Group rearing allows rabbits to fulfil their physiological and ethological needs. Group sizes should be of at least 20 rabbits in order for them to have sufficient contact with conspecifics. Rabbits should not be mixed with unfamiliar animals. There must be separate pens for male and female animals.

#### 8. Animal Care and Health Monitoring

Only healthy and robust breeding lines may be used. The entire animal herd is under the care of a licensed veterinarian who must visit the herd at least once per fattening period. Monitoring is recorded.

General health is assessed twice a day by breeder. Care must be taken to prevent diseases and injuries. The breeder moves the animals without using any sharp or cutting objects. Rabbits are never lifted by their ears or feet.

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Injured and sick animals must be separated from the group and placed in a specific compartment. Dead animals must be removed and properly disposed in closed containers. The mortality rate must be recorded and followed up.

Appropriate disposal methods for faeces must be in place in order that they do not impact the population.

The use of pharmaceuticals is only for therapeutic purposes according to the instructions of a veterinarian and withdrawal periods are taken into account. The use of pharmaceuticals is duly registered. In Case patterns are detected in the use of antibiotics, a root cause analysis must be performed and action taken accordingly.

The breeder also receives feedback from the slaughterhouse regarding the diagnostic data registered in this facility (*ante-* and *post-mortem* inspections). These inputs will be analysed by the Responsible Veterinarian to determine whether actions are required in the livestock farm management, design and/or practices.

#### **9. Feed and water supply**

Feed is provided in sufficient quantity based on nutritional and behavioural needs. A minimum of 60% of the feed must be self-produced or from the region that complies with the "on-farm production" GMP code.

Only QS-recognized or Bio-Feed must be supplied. Feed must be free of gene technology, in compliance with Regulation (EC) 1829/2003. For purchased feed a sworn affidavit from supplier plus results for GMO testing on high risk ingredients must be provided. For self-produced feed a sampling program on GMO ingredients must be in place and fulfilled.

There must be sufficient feeding space for each animal. Rabbits must also have permanent access to fresh and clean drinking water.

#### **10. Pest Control**

The premises in which the rabbits are housed protect them from the weather and predators and prevent the introduction of pests as much as possible. There must be no structural defects that may enable the penetration of pests and no signs of pest infestation on the farm.

A qualified pest control must take place according to a bait plan, either as an outsourced service or with trained own personnel. Sufficient functional bait sites must be available. Records of bait checking and measures taken regarding pest control must be kept. The bait plan must be reviewed once a year based on the bait checking outcomes.