

## **DELIVERABLE**

### **DL.4.1.2 REVIEW OF EXISTING COURSES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF RABBIT WELFARE ON FARM**

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## 1. Introduction

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA aims to review and assess the existing training courses and materials for rabbit welfare assessment on farm in use at Member States (MS) or at other levels (e.g., regional training courses). The report includes a description of existing courses and materials considering information on objectives, content and training materials as well as an identification of the gaps that the Centre might address in the future.

## 2. Methodology used

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA requested from the Competent Authority contact points at the beginning of 2022 the National training materials (from 2010 to 2021) for assessment of rabbit welfare on-farm. The Centre only received replies from seven MSs. Most of them, reported that there is no rabbit production or specific training and material for inspectors. Italy shared specific guidelines for rabbit welfare on farm from the Ministry of Health, but they do not have a training course for inspectors.

It is known that some general training courses about rabbit welfare exist (i.e. at least in Italy, France, and Spain). Nevertheless, these courses are targeted mostly for farmers to have a basic understanding of rabbit biology, welfare, and methods of rearing. The one offered in Italy is targeted also to veterinarians or technicians working with rabbits but addresses more or less the same general topics. No training courses specifically made for official inspectors are available at the moment to the Centre knowledge.

## 3. Gaps of knowledge

The main producers of rabbits in the European Union are Spain, Italy, and France (Eurostat, 2022<sup>1</sup>). Therefore, the Centre expected to receive some specific national training courses at least from them. However, they do not seem to provide any specific training for official inspectors. Some courses are available in these MSs for veterinarians, technicians, or farmers, but addressing general topics.

In order to assess the welfare of rabbits on farm, it is essential to know what indicators are available to assess each requirement of the Directive 98/58/EC, of 20 July 1998, concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. A specific training course for official inspectors addressing this topic could be very useful but it is lacking in all MSs.

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA has been working on the topic of rabbit welfare and has produced this deliverable:

- 2021 - DL. 3.1.2. Farm rabbits' welfare in different husbandry systems, gaps of knowledge, and recommendations ([available online here](#)) are given in this review.

The review describes the different rabbits housing and management systems existing in the European Union with an evaluation of their positive and negative welfare aspects to allow a better understanding of the

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<sup>1</sup> Consultation of the Eurostat database "Main livestock indicators by NUTS 2 regions" (data coverage: 2013-2020), for "Live rabbits and breeding females", online data code: EF\_LSK\_MAIN, last update: 03/10/2022 23:00.

current situation in all its facets, highlighting also the critical points and future prospects. This could be used as a general approach for specific training courses.

Additionally, this year, the Centre has produced this deliverable:

- 2022 – DL. 2.1.5. List of welfare indicators and methods of assessment for rabbits on-farm (available on-line from 02.12.2022).

The report combines a list of welfare indicators and methods of assessment relative to on-farm rabbits' welfare. Welfare indicators and their methods of assessment are developed following a review of the existing scientific literature, and the checklist and guidelines used by official inspectors in MSs. The list is not exhaustive, but EURCAW-Poultry-SFA chose the most relevant ones according to their knowledge and the available scientific data. Among the different welfare indicators, animal-based indicators (ABIs) are prioritized but resource-based (RBIs) and management-based indicators (MBIs) are also provided. These indicators and methods of assessment are evaluated according to their validity, feasibility, and reliability in order to deliver to Competent Authorities useful information for official controls. This document could be used as a basis for a future training course specifically addressed to official inspectors regarding the assessment of rabbit welfare during inspections.

With the concern about the lack of training for inspectors in mind, the Centre is planning to perform a webinar during 2023 about "Assessment of the welfare of rabbits on farm". The webinar will present the most relevant ABIs that can be used by inspectors to assess the welfare of rabbits on farm, based on the deliverable 2022-DL 2.1.5.

## 4. Conclusions

- 1) Training courses on rabbit welfare for official inspectors are not in use at any Member State, to the Centre knowledge.
- 2) There is a lack of information about the assessment of rabbit welfare, including indicators and methods.
- 3) EURCAW-Poultry-SFA delivered a review about rabbit welfare on farm in different husbandry systems, gaps of knowledge, and recommendations. This document could be used as a general approach for specific training courses.
- 4) EURCAW-Poultry-SFA has produced a document about welfare indicators and methods of assessment for rabbits on-farm (available on-line from 02.12.2022). This document could be used as a basis for a future training course specifically addressed to official inspectors regarding assessment of rabbit welfare during inspections.
- 5) EURCAW-Poultry-SFA plans to offer during 2023 a webinar about "Assessment of the welfare of rabbits on farm". The webinar will present the most relevant ABIs that can be used by inspectors to assess the welfare of rabbits on farm. It aims to fill the lack of information about specific indicators for the assessment of welfare on farm during inspections.