



Round Table 2:

## **RABBIT HOUSING -new farming systems with the regulations and social demand?**

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**ILVO**



**Flanders**  
is agriculture and fisheries

*12th World Rabbit Congress, 3-5 November 2021, Nantes, France*

# Organisation of the round table

- ❑ **General introduction** – objectives (Chair)
- ❑ **3 short presentations** of 10 -15'
  - Laurence Fortun-Lamothe (F - INRAE): situation in France
  - Liesbeth Van Damme (B - ILVO): focus on doe housing
  - Karel De Greef (NL- WUR): focus on social demand
- ❑ **Each presentation followed by a discussion** focussed on the topic
- ❑ **General discussion:**
  - Each country present will have the opportunity to present briefly (5' max.) the situation in his country
  - General questions - discussions



# The problem:



- In **commercial rabbit farms** cage housing is (was) the standard
- **Increasing pressure** from NGO's and the society to ban the (small) individual cages
- Increasing demand for improved “welfare” and ... a rabbit has a high cuddly ability (pet syndrome)  $\longleftrightarrow$  **social demand of the society**
- **No EC legislation**, some countries have a legislation: B, NL, D, ...
- Recently the European citizens initiative “**End of cage**” calls the Commission to propose legislation to ban the use of cages for farmed animals (e.g. rabbits)
- Are there **alternatives** for cage housing in commercial rabbit production?
- Combining “animal welfare” and “economic feasibility”




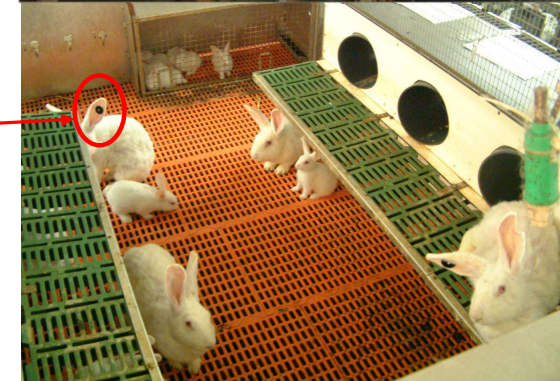
# For fatteners :

- Different non cage housing systems were developed and are increasingly applied
- E.g. in the NL, B and DE: > 50% of fatteners in park systems
- Definition ....
  - **Open top** and **min. 1 side  $\geq 1,8$  m**
  - **Enriched**: 2nd level, gnawing material
  - **800 cm<sup>2</sup>/rabbit** and **min. 20 rabbits in group**
  - **Plastic (slatted) bottom** (if wire 80% has to be covered)
  - .....
- Improved natural behaviour expression
- More enteric problems especially due to plastic slatted flooring



# For reproducing does:

- **Continuous group housing:** both welfare and reproduction data are negatively impacted (Szendrő *et al.*, 2011; ...).
- **Problems: mutual aggression of females, high losses of kits, pseudo pregnancy, does not fit with AI management, ...**
- **Individual recognition system (electronic ear tag):** 
  - Tackles common use of nestboxes
  - Not compatible with management of large batch production
  - Pseudo pregnancy ....
  - Expensive (not economical)
- Efforts to develop a **part-time group housing** of females
  - During critical period (around parturition) individual
  - Encouraging results
  - Still aggression problems after regrouping: research to tackle necessary



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  - Laurence Fortun-Lamothe (F - INRAE): situation in France and research efforts
  - Liesbeth Van Damme (B - ILVO): focus on research with does
  - Karel De Greef (NL- WUR): with focus on social demand
- ❑ **Each presentation followed by a discussion** focussed on the topic
- ❑ **Scientific congress**, less us avoid to lobby for a certain housing system but concentrate on what can we add as researchers to the society