**Part E – Rabbits**

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| **Condition** | **Guidance** | **Condition met**  **YES / NO** | **Officers Notes** |
| **5.0 Suitable Environment** |  Slatted, grid or wire mesh floors must not be used in rabbit housing.   Angora Rabbits, when in full coat, may be kept on mesh floor cages for a maximum of 4 weeks. The mesh should be of a small size to allow faeces to pass through. Once they start to moult they should be clipped and returned to an enclosure with a solid floor and suitable bedding. |  |  |
| **Environmental conditions (including enclosure sizes)** |  Enclosures must be large enough for rabbits to be able to stand fully upright on their haunches without their ears touching the roof and lie fully outstretched (without touching the sides of the enclosure or another rabbit). |  |  |
|  |  Where rabbits are housed on a retail premises, additional provision must be made for regular exercise. This can be provided by a programme of regular exercise outside of the housing, or housing that provides a significant permanent area in addition to the required area. |  |  |
|  |  See the minimum enclosure sizes that must be followed |  |  |
| **Bedding and substrate** |  Rabbits must be provided with a suitable nesting material in sufficient amounts. Suitable nesting materials include good quality straw or dust-free hay. |  |  |
|  |  Rabbits must be provided with a suitable litter and substrates in sufficient amounts. Suitable litter materials include dust-free wood shavings, supplemented with hay. |  |  |
|  |  Sawdust is not suitable as either nesting or litter materials. |  |  |
| **Temperature** |  The ambient temperature of the inside area of the sleeping accommodation should be no lower than 12°C and no higher than 26°C. |  |  |
|  |  In very hot weather, cooling procedures must be in place, such as, but not limited to, fans to increase air movement, ice packs or air conditioning. |  |  |
|  |  In cold temperatures, extra nesting material must be provided, unless alternative temperature control is provided for example heating. |  |  |
|  |  Enclosures must not be placed in full sun without adequate shade provision and should be protected from drafts and rain. |  |  |
| **Light** |  An example of a suitable light-dark cycle for rabbits is 12 hours light and 12 hours dark. Outdoor rabbits are subject to seasonal light variation. |  |  |
|  | **Minimum enclosure sizes for rabbits**   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Weight of rabbit | Maximum stocking density | Minimum floor area (m²) | Example dimensions (metres)  Width x length | Minimum cage height (metres) | Additional floor area for each additional animal (m²) | | Up to 4kg | 4 | 0.4 | 1 x 0.4  Or  0.8 x 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.1 | | 4 to 6kg | 2 | 0.4 | 1 x 0.4  Or  0.8 x 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.2 | | Over 6kg | 2 | 0.6 | 1 x 0.6  Or  1.2 x 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.3 |   **Minimum enclosure sizes for rabbits - higher standards**   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Weight of rabbit | Maximum stocking density | Minimum floor area (m²) | Example dimensions (metres)  Width x length | Minimum cage height (metres) | Additional floor area for each additional animal (m²) | | Up to 4kg | 4 | 0.67 | 1 x 0.67  Or  0.8 x 0.8 | 0.45 | 0.3  (approx. 45%) | | 4 to 6kg | 2 | 0.86 | 1 x 0.86  Or  0.9 x 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.33  (approx. 38%) | | Over 6kg | 2 | 0.86 | 1 x 0.86  Or  0.9 x 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.4  (approx. 45%) | |  |  |
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| **Transporting and handling** |  Rabbits must be able to sit, lie down and turn around in the carrier. |  |  |
|  |  Pregnant does are not to be transported within ten days of their expected birth date unless on veterinary advice. Veterinary advice must also be sought before transporting lactating does and kittens. If nursing does and kittens are to be transported they require additional care including adequate bedding and nesting material. |  |  |
| **Housing and competition** |  There must be sufficient cover for each rabbit housed within an enclosure and there must be two entrance or exit points to prevent monopolisation. |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Providing a Suitable Environment for Rabbits** |  Where rabbits are housed, they should have permanent access to a separate sleeping area.   See the higher standard minimum enclosure sizes for rabbits that must be followed. |  |  |
| **Optional Higher Standards for Providing a Suitable Environment for Rabbits** |  For open top cages, rabbits that are physically able to use platforms must be provided with access to a platform or multiple platforms. For closed top cages, rabbits must be able to access these easily and be able to sit on them fully without touching the cage roof. Care should be taken with open top enclosures to ensure sufficient height to prevent escapes or access by predators. If platforms are provided in closed top cages, rabbits must be able to access these easily and be able to sit on them fully without touching the cage roof. |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Toileting Rabbits** |  Litter trays must be provided that are impermeable, easy to clean and disinfect or be disposable. Litter trays must be deep cleaned at least weekly. |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Transporting and Handling Rabbits** |  Containers must open from the top to facilitate removal of the animal. Containers must be lined with newspaper or bedding to absorb urine. |  |  |
| **6.0 Suitable Diet** |  |  |  |
| **Diet** |  All rabbits must be fed a suitable diet primarily consisting of a constant supply of ad lib fresh hay or grass. Hay needs to be free from contamination. |  |  |
|  |  A small portion of commercially available rabbit foods can be given to supplement the primary diet of hay or grass. A balanced and adequate nutrient intake should be ensured. Selective feeding should be considered and mitigated by staff. Food must be appropriate to the age and breed of the rabbit and manufacturer’s feeding guidelines must be followed. |  |  |
|  |  If used, leafy greens and treat foods must be given in moderation and in small amounts as appropriate to the individual rabbit. |  |  |
| **Monitoring** |  A veterinarian must be consulted if there is no improvement where a rabbit has mild anorexia or reduced appetite within 12 hours of onset or the condition of the individual(s) deteriorates. |  |  |
|  |  A veterinarian must be consulted if a rabbit shows signs of constipation or diarrhoea. |  |  |
| **Water** |  Water may be provided in a clean gravity fill drinking bottle (which must be of a suitable size for the individual), automatic drinkers, or in bowls. Bowls are not suitable if kittens are present. |  |  |
|  |  Any changes to drinking receptacles must be made gradually and drinking monitored to ensure animals are drinking normally. |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Rabbits’ Diet** |  Hay must be provided in a hay receptacle or feeder at an appropriate height, which keeps it off the floor and reduces the risk of contamination of the hay.   Foraged foods (that have been foraged in uncontaminated areas and correctly identified) must be fed to the rabbits. Commercially available dried forages including willow can also be used to supplement the diet and provide a low risk alternative to foraged foods. |  |  |
| **Optional Higher Standards for Rabbits’ Diet** |  Rabbits must be provided with access to growing grass to graze on, which can be in planted grass trays. Alternatively, rabbits can be provided with 2 different types of hay. |  |  |
| **Optional Higher Standards for Rabbits’ Water** |  Water must be provided for rabbits in multiple bottles or bowls. During hot weather, both a bottle and a bowl must be provided (unless kittens are present, in which case only bottles are suitable). |  |  |
| **10.0 Monitoring of behaviour and training of animals** |  Suitable enrichment items include, but are not limited to:   * Tunnels * Paper bags filled with hay * Willow sticks * Balls * Branches from non-toxic, untreated fruit trees (for example, apple) |  |  |
|  |  New objects must be introduced carefully and not exchanged daily. |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Monitoring Rabbits’ Behaviour and Training** |  Dietary enrichment must be used. For example, nuggets can be scattered around the enclosure, fed in puzzle feeders or hidden in paper bags or cardboard tubes. Where puzzle feeders or dispensers are used, rabbits must be monitored to ensure they can access the food. |  |  |
| **11.0 Animal Handling and Interactions** |  |  |  |
| **Handling** |  Rabbits must be protected from over handling by staff or the public. Handling of rabbits by a third party must only take place with potential owners as an element of a socialisation programme. |  |  |
|  |  Rabbits must not be placed on their back in positions of tonic immobility or picked up by the scruff of their neck or ears. |  |  |
| **Interactions** |  Rabbits must be correctly sexed. |  |  |
|  |  All efforts must be made to ensure rabbits are not housed singly. Where this is unavoidable, special attention must be paid to specific human interaction and they must be provided with extra enrichment. A plan must be in place for all singly housed rabbits. |  |  |
|  |  Rabbits must not share accommodation with guinea pigs. |  |  |
| **12.0 Protection from Pain, Suffering, Injury and Disease** |  |  |  |
| **Disease prevention** |  Advice that rabbits should be vaccinated against myxomatosis and rabbit haemorrhagic disease (also known as RHD 1 and 2) must be provided with sales. |  |  |
| **Checking** |  Rabbits’ front teeth and nails must be checked regularly unless inappropriate at the stage of the breeding cycle, and treated as necessary, to ensure they are not overgrown or misaligned - only a veterinarian may correct overgrown/misaligned teeth. Rabbits must have a pre-mating check and then a check at weaning time. |  |  |

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| **Higher standards (Required) Rabbits** | Standards Met Yes/No |
| Where rabbits are housed, they should have permanent access to a separate sleeping area. |  |
| See the higher standard minimum enclosure sizes for rabbits that must be followed. |  |
| Litter trays must be provided that are impermeable, easy to clean and disinfect or be disposable. Litter trays must be deep cleaned at least weekly. |  |
| Containers must open from the top to facilitate removal of the animal. Containers must be lined with newspaper or bedding to absorb urine. |  |
| Hay must be provided in a hay receptacle or feeder at an appropriate height, which keeps it off the floor and reduces the risk of contamination of the hay. |  |
| Foraged foods (that have been foraged in uncontaminated areas and correctly identified) must be fed to the rabbits. Commercially available dried forages including willow can also be used to supplement the diet and provide a low risk alternative to foraged foods. |  |
| Dietary enrichment must be used. For example, nuggets can be scattered around the enclosure, fed in puzzle feeders or hidden in paper bags or cardboard tubes. Where puzzle feeders or dispensers are used, rabbits must be monitored to ensure they can access the food. |  |
| **Higher Standards (Optional)** 50% required | Standards met Yes/No |
| For open top cages, rabbits that are physically able to use platforms must be provided with access to a platform or multiple platforms. For closed top cages, rabbits must be able to access these easily and be able to sit on them fully without touching the cage roof. Care should be taken with open top enclosures to ensure sufficient height to prevent escapes or access by predators. If platforms are provided in closed top cages, rabbits must be able to access these easily and be able to sit on them fully without touching the cage roof. |  |
| Rabbits must be provided with access to growing grass to graze on, which can be in planted grass trays. Alternatively, rabbits can be provided with 2 different types of hay. |  |
| Water must be provided for rabbits in multiple bottles or bowls. During hot weather, both a bottle and a bowl must be provided (unless kittens are present, in which case only bottles are suitable). |  |