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Dear WRSA officers and members,

Six months have passed since our ninth Newsletter. A few months before we can finally celebrate our 12<sup>th</sup> World Rabbit Congress, there are certain aspects that we want to inform you about and that will surely be of interest to you. We have tried to summarize the main news of these last six months in the current issue.

## Letter from the WRSA President

Dear WRSA members and followers,

Unfortunately, Covid pandemy now belongs to our daily life, and most of us struggle with the various associated regulatory constraints. This particularly increased the organizational work for our world congress in November (3-5 November, Nantes, France). Now the work is intensifying, and I am pleased to announce that over 230 short papers have been accepted by the scientific committee, and will be presented. Eight main conferences will be also presented (look at WRC website to discover the topics), and five round tables will be organised.

The congress is also the time for our WRSA general meeting, with the official registration of new branches and the designation of the branch who will organise the next congress. Already, every branch can apply for organising the next WRC in 2024, first by sending an email to the general secretary and to the president of the WRSA. At this occasion, a new WRSA board will be elected for the next period of 2021-2024.

Do not forget to use our discussion forum for every question to our community:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/world-rabbit-science-asso>

Visit and publish in the WRSA journal: World Rabbit Science

<http://polipapers.upv.es/index.php/wrs>

Visit our WRSA website (<http://world-rabbit-science.com/>) and our Facebook page

(<https://www.facebook.com/wrsaface/>).

I hope to meet you in Nantes

Best wishes

Thierry GIDENNE    
WRSA President  
INRAE, Auzeville (France)

## Last News of the World Rabbit Congress

**<https://colloque.inrae.fr/wrc2020/>**

Our 12th World Rabbit Congress will be held in Nantes (France) from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> November. The organising committee have decided to propose a **congress using a "hybrid" system**, conjugating "face-to-face" participations AND on-line participations. Last information's and details about the concrete organisation are on the website of the congress (<https://colloque.inrae.fr/wrc2020/>) and on the WRSA website, and our social network (WRSA Facebook, WRSA google forum).

Over 230 short papers will be presented, and published, provided the speaking author will be registered.

All the information about the scientific program, the organisation, the venue, the sponsoring are on the official website of the congress: <https://colloque.inrae.fr/wrc2020/>

**We look forward to welcoming you in Nantes.**

The scientific and organising committee of the 12<sup>th</sup> WRC

## ‘End the cage age’

The plenary session of the European Parliament has voted last June 10, 2021 in favour (558 votes in favour and 37 against) of a resolution asking the EU Commission to come up with legislative proposals to **ban cages in animal farming by 2027**. Main points of the resolution are that (1) alternatives to cage farming exist and should be encouraged. (2) Ban has to be based on impact assessment and species-by-species approach. (3) Farmers and livestock breeders will have a transition period and proper support and (4) imports of animal products have to fully comply with EU rules on cage-free.



This decision directly affects the production of rabbit meat, and will pose a scientific, technical, and professional challenge for all those involved in this sector.

The report expressly mentions the opinion of the European Citizens’ Initiative “End of the cage age” about the current situation of rabbit production, highlighting that:

1. Rabbits are the animals most commonly housed in cages, with very few enrichment measures compared to other species.  
“...whereas **rabbits** are the animals most commonly housed in cages, with approximately 85 % in barren cages and 9 % in enriched cages, while approximately 50 % of laying hens in the EU were housed in enriched cages in 2019, with the percentages being considerably higher in most eastern, central and southern EU Member States;...”
2. Some EU Member States have already banned the use of both barren and enriched cages for rabbits:  
“...whereas a few Member States have already advanced beyond the minimum EU standards and prohibited the use of enriched cages for egg-laying hens, both barren and enriched cages for **rabbits**, or sow stalls and farrowing crates, with phase-out legislation in other Member States due to come into force in 2030 at the latest;...”
3. Alternative "commercially viable" systems already exist to produce cage-free rabbits  
“...whereas there are alternative systems which are commercially viable and already in use, e.g. barn, free range and organic systems for hens, floor pens, and outdoor free-range or organic systems for **rabbits**, indoor and outdoor free-farrowing and group housing systems for sows, barn and aviary systems for quail, and group housing systems for calves;...”

4. Specific legislation is requested for the protection of rabbits, since it is the second species in number of animals farmed in the EU

*“...Stresses that **rabbits** are the second most farmed species in the EU in terms of numbers of animals, with a majority of them reared in cages with inadequate welfare standards; calls on the Commission in this regard to propose specific EU legislation on minimum standards for the protection of farmed **rabbits**;...”*

In this way, and despite the challenge that this forced situation is going to be for the rabbit production sector, a new horizon opens, with difficulties and opportunities, where science and knowledge must take center stage. When developing policies, both the opinion of the productive sector and the demand of citizens must be considered, but when legislating, if the true objective is to improve the welfare of the rabbit, who should speak is the science, which has no greater purpose than truth.

## Selected Publications

It is for us a pleasure to report that the impact factor (JIF) of our World Rabbit Science journal has risen this last year, reaching a value of 1,233. This places our journal back in the Q3 quartile (40/63 Agriculture, Dairy & Animal Science; 37.30 percentile). Here you can find the most Popular Articles in World Rabbit Science last 12 months:

1. [Divergent selection for fat index in Pannon Ka rabbits: genetic parameters, selection response](#) 4976 views since: 2020-09-30
2. [Effect of dietary antioxidant supplementation on rabbit performance, meat quality and oxidative stability of muscles](#) 1667 views since: 2020-09-30
3. [Challenging the growing rabbit with a moderately pathogenic E. coli under ad libitum or limited feed intake conditions: impact on digestive physiology, bacterial communities, and on post-weaning growth](#) 934 views since: 2021-03-31
4. [Beneficial effects of Enterococcus faecium EF9a administration in rabbit diet](#) 868 views since: 2020-12-30
5. [Comparison of exterior traits in selected giant and medium rabbit breeds](#) 764 views since: 2020-12-30

Other publications in the last 6 months (the 10 first in function of the cites and position in Google Scholar):

1. [Current knowledge on the multifactorial regulation of corpora lutea lifespan: the rabbit model](#). Animals 2021, 11, 296
2. [A potential atypical case of rabbit haemorrhagic disease in a dwarf rabbit](#). Animals 2021, 11, 40
3. [Low-sodium dry-cured rabbit leg: A novel meat product with healthier properties](#). Meat Science 2021, 173, 108372
4. [Effect of different cooking methods of rabbit meat on topographical changes, physicochemical characteristics, fatty acids profile, microbial quality and sensory attributes](#). Meat Science 2021, 181, 108612
5. [Zinc and/or selenium enriched spirulina as antioxidants in growing rabbit diets to alleviate the deleterious impacts of heat stress during summer season](#). Animals 2021, 11, 756
6. [Impact of feed restriction and fragmented feed distribution on performance, intake behaviour and digestion of the growing rabbit](#). Animal 2021, 15, 100270
7. [Evaluation of dextran for rabbit sperm cryopreservation: Effect on frozen-thawed rabbit sperm quality variables and reproductive performance](#). Animal Reproduction, 2021, 226, 106714
8. [Genetic analysis of functional longevity in a complete diallel crossing experiment involving four maternal rabbit lines](#). J Animal Breeding and Genetics 2021, 4, 474-481
9. [Effect of fermented rapeseed meal on the gastrointestinal microbiota and immune status of rabbit \(Oryctolagus cuniculus\)](#). Animals, 11, 716
10. [Factors affecting rabbit sperm cryopreservation: a mini-review](#). Zygote, first view 1-8

## International and National Congresses

In the last six months, WRSA has news about two events held on-line due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ITAVI Rabbit Day

The “Journée ITAVI Lapin de Chair” was held last January 21, 2021 via internet. The webinar was presented by Anne Richard (ITAVI-ANVOL) and Chantal Davoust (ASFC) and had a duration of 7 hours. The first session of presentations was focused on research, repercussions and solutions for RHDV2. Then, the second session focused mainly on the welfare of the rabbit and alternative housing systems. Finally, the third session was mainly addressed to methodologies and good practices to reduce mortality both in the nest and in the growing period. More information at:

<http://www.cuniculture.info/Docs/Magazine/Magazine2020/Mag47-01.htm>



### Webiasescu 2021 “The price of the feed”

As you all know, feed prices have shown a general increase throughout 2020, in line with the increase also registered by the raw materials used in their manufacture. The evolution of these markets is sometimes difficult for producers to understand, since the rise in feed prices is coinciding with a historic cereal production season, but the cereal trade belongs to a global market. On the other hand, rabbit feed has a series of characteristics, such as the inclusion of fibrous raw materials and the importance of the quality of the granule, which gives it a series of particularities when setting its price. As ASESCU was aware of the concern of the entire rabbit sector with the evolution of these prices, it has organized last May 6, 2021, a WebiAsescu focused on "The price of rabbit feed", where Dr. Enrique Blas (UPV) explained “The components of the price of the rabbit feed” and Fernando Caja (Nanta Purchasing Director; Nutreco) exposed the “Situation of the raw materials markets”.

The webinar, already viewed by more than 600 people, is still available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2h4-FuNUfk>



## Webinar ASIC 2021 “Trends in Rabbit Meat Consumption”

To deepen the effects of the epochal changes taking place in agro-food production and in particular of rabbit meat, ASIC organized this webinar last May 13, 2021, with the general aim of evaluating possible future scenarios for Italian rabbit farming also in the European context.

The event, which hosted the speakers Massimiliano Petracci (University of Bologna), Frédéric Leroy ((Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Stefania Crovato (Experimental Zooprophyllactic Institute of the Venetie) and Massimiliano Lazzari (Food Sales Department Coop Italia), with Angelo Gamberini in the role of moderator (AgroNotizie), attracted over 160 participants, 20% of foreign nationality. The program, presentation in pdf and the webinar is still available at

<http://www ASIC-wrsa.it/convegno2021.php>



## 45th Symposium of Rabbit Farming ADESCU Virtual

On October 6 and 7, 2021, the Spanish rabbit sector is invited to attend the 45th ADESCU Rabbit Symposium. Given that the situation of the COVID pandemic advises to maintain prudence even at that time, the congress of the rabbit sector will be held in virtual mode in two afternoon sessions.

The objectives of the forty-fifth edition of the Rabbit Symposium are to serve as a meeting point for rabbit farmers, technicians, businessmen, companies, professionals, teachers and researchers to analyze the current situation of the rabbit sector in Spain, address issues of concern and serve as a scenario for the presentation of the advances in research and technological development that have occurred in the field of rabbit farming since the 2020 WebiAsescu.

The program is available at: <https://asescu.com/programa-45-symposium-cunicultura/>

The Symposium is free for ADESCU members and the fees for non members and students are 20 and 10 €, respectively. You can register at: <https://asescu.com/45sympvirtual/>



Best regards and wishing you a great summer

Juan José Pascual  
WRSAs General Secretary



Valencia (Spain), July 30, 2021

WRSAs newsletter (July 2021)