

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL STANDARD

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Rabbit – Code of Practice – Slaughtering



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Foreword

In 2020, the Philippine's swine industry was devastated by African Swine Fever (ASF). Due to the ASF outbreak in the swine industry, the Department of Agriculture considered rabbit meat as an alternative to pork as a source of protein. In the same year, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and Association of Rabbit Meat Producers, Inc. (ARAMP) proposed to develop a standard for humane and hygienic slaughtering practices for rabbit. This standard aims to assist those who are engaged in the rabbit meat production on the hygienic and human slaughtering practices for rabbit to be marketed commercially. The Technical Working Group (TWG) tasked to develop the PNS was created through Special Order (SO) No. 817, series of 2021 (Addendum to the SO No. 81, series of 2021, "Creation of TWG for the Development of PNS for Agriculture and Fishery Products, Machinery, Tools, and Equipment) and SO No. 103, series of 2022 (Creation of TWG for the Development of PNS for Agriculture and Fishery Products, Machinery, Tools, and Equipment). The TWG was composed of representatives from the relevant government agencies, academe, and private sector. The draft PNS underwent a series of TWG meetings and stakeholder consultations conducted physically and via online platforms before its endorsement to the Secretary for approval.

It is drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

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1 Scope

This standard provides recommended practices for the humane and hygienic slaughtering of rabbit intended for human consumption.

2 Normative References

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all their contents constitute the requirements of this document. The latest edition of the referenced documents (including any amendments) applies.

Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) – Department of Health (DOH). (2014). Revised rules and regulations governing the labeling of prepackaged food products further amending certain provisions of Administrative Order No. 88-B s. 1984 or the “Rules and regulations governing the labeling of prepackaged food products distributed in the Philippines (DOH-FDA Administrative Order [AO] No. 2014-0030-A). <https://www.fda.gov.ph/administrative-order-no-2014-0030-a/>

Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) - Department of Agriculture (DA). (2008). Rules and regulations on humane handling in the slaughter of animals for food (DA AO No. 18, series of 2008). <https://www.bai.gov.ph/index.php/laws-issuances/administrative-order/category/87-ao-2008>

National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS)– DA. (2012). Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of chilled, frozen, and thawed meat in meat markets (DA-NMIS AO No. 6, series of 2012). <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2012/01/12/da-administrative-order-no-6-s-2012/>

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NMIS- DA. (2021). Rules and regulations on humane and hygienic slaughter and meat inspection of rabbit for food (DA-NMIS AO No. 35, series of 2021).

3 Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this document, the following terms and definitions apply:

3.1 competent authority

official government organization/agency having jurisdiction

3.2

dam

mother rabbit

3.3

kindling

giving birth

3.4

pelt

skin and attached fur from a rabbit carcass

4 Minimum Requirements

4.1 Slaughterhouse Premises

4.1.1 The slaughterhouse should be accredited by the competent authority.

4.1.2 The receiving area for live rabbits should be cleaned and/or sanitized at all times.

4.1.3 A comprehensive and standard cleaning program for the premises should be established in accordance with regulations set by the competent authority.

4.1.4 The premises should be kept in good condition to prevent pest access and eliminate their potential breeding sites.

4.2 Slaughter Lines, Equipment, and Tools

4.2.1 The cutting tools intended for slaughtering rabbit should be sharp and made of stainless steel, and the blade should be at least 5 inches.

4.2.2 The slaughtering lines, equipment, and tools should be kept clean and sanitized after each operation and sanitized before the start of the operation.

4.2.3 If applicable, the mechanical slaughter machine should be clean and working well before usage and routinely cleaned and tested to ensure its efficacy.

4.2.4 The butcher should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when slaughtering rabbit.

4.3 Arrival of Rabbits in the Slaughterhouse

4.3.1 This section shall be in accordance with Section 5 of DA AO No. 18, series of 2008 (Rules and regulations on humane handling in the slaughter of animals for food).

4.3.2 Live rabbit transported from farm to the slaughterhouse should be healthy and free from any communicable and contagious diseases.

4.3.3 Transporter should secure the necessary certificates and clearances from the competent authority.

4.3.4 Crates/cages should be clean, sanitary, and in good condition without broken plastic or metal parts protruding inward that might cause injuries and bruises.

4.4 Unloading

4.4.1 The management should provide appropriate equipment to ease unloading and stacking of crates/cages without creating unnecessary stress or injury to the rabbits.

4.4.2 Butchers or handlers should practice utmost care in handling and stacking the crates/cages.

4.4.3 The holding area should have good ventilation and lighting facilities. It should have enough space for the stacking of crates/cages.

4.5 Weighing

4.5.1 The management of the slaughterhouse should provide weighing scale for weighing live rabbits.

4.5.2 The weighing scale should be properly calibrated, clean, and disinfected prior to its use.

4.6 Holding

4.6.1 Rabbits for slaughter should be rested at least 30 minutes prior to slaughter.

4.6.2 During holding, the height and spacing of the stacked crate/cage should promote proper ventilation to avoid heatstroke.

4.7 Ante-mortem Inspection

4.7.1 Ante-mortem inspection should be done by an inspector authorized by the competent authority.

4.7.2 Sick and pregnant rabbits should be prohibited to be slaughtered.

4.7.3 Dam should be slaughtered at least 30 days after kindling.

4.7.4 The ante-mortem inspection shall be in accordance with DC No. 1, series of 2014 (Revised IRR of R.A. no. 9296, otherwise as "The meat inspection code of the Philippines", as amended by R.A. 10536) and AO 35, series of 2021 (Rules and regulations on humane and hygienic slaughter, and meat inspection of rabbit for food).

4.8 Restraint

4.8.1 Appropriate restraining materials and practices should be used, depending on the available stunning method.

4.8.2 Rabbits shall be removed individually handled by the scruff in one hand and with the other hand supporting its back leg or holding the weight on its belly.

4.8.3 Restraint of rabbits for mechanical and electrical stunning should have a non-slip, solid surface with a backstop to prevent backing away of the animal. For electrical stunning, animal handler should wear rubber gloves and boots.

5 Slaughtering

5.1 Stunning

5.1.1 Stunning should make the animal unconscious and insensible to pain.

5.1.2 Rabbits should be stunned individually using a recommended stunning method such as electrical or mechanical stunning.

5.1.2.1 Head-only electrical stunning

a. It is recommended to use V-shaped electrodes positioned vertically at the base of the ears avoiding the eyes.

b. The electrical stunner should have an output voltage of 100-117v, current of 140-400mA, and frequency of 50Hz. Duration or contact time for electric stunning should be 1-3 seconds for efficiency.

5.1.2.2 Mechanical Stunning of Rabbits includes Penetrative Methods

a. The butcher should exercise caution when using penetrative captive bolt as the skin over the head is loose, may slip, and cause inaccurate aim.

b. Penetrative and non-penetrative captive bolt stunning should cause a significant blow to the head that will result in immediate loss of consciousness.

5.1.3 The operator should check for signs of unconsciousness or insensibility and if re-stunning is needed.

5.2 Shackling

5.2.1 Rabbits should be hung from its hind feet for easy slitting, bleeding, and further dressing.

5.2.2 Rabbits should be hung upside-down with its abdomen facing towards the butcher for the slaughtering procedure.

5.3 Slitting and Bleeding

5.3.1 Stun to stick (slit) interval should not be more than 10 seconds per rabbit.

5.3.2 Both the jugular veins and carotid arteries should be severed swiftly right after stunning to prevent recovery of consciousness.

5.3.3 The cut should be made by making an incision ventrally behind the mandibles, where the jugular veins and carotid arteries are found.

5.3.4 Profuse bleeding should be seen right after cutting the jugular veins and carotid arteries, which is a sign of effective bleeding.

5.3.5 The absence of blinking, pinch, and/or hit reflex should be used as an indicator of death and the end of bleeding.

5.4 Skinning/Pelting

5.4.1 Skinning should start from the hind leg joint going to the head or to the neck.

5.4.2 The skinning process should be done efficiently to prevent contaminating the carcass with fur and other contaminants.

5.4.3 The procedure should be performed by technically skilled butcher and should be done in a hygienic manner.

5.4.4 Removal of head is optional and should be done after skinning.

5.4.5 The butcher should cut the hind feet at the joint after the pelt is removed.

5.5 Scalding and Removal of the Fur

5.5.1 For rabbit carcass with skin-on, the whole rabbit body should be dipped in hot water between 55°C and 80°C for a defined period of time.

5.5.2 Once the fur is fully removed, the carcass should again be hanged on its hind feet with the abdomen facing towards the butcher.

5.6 Cutting of Head and Front Feet

5.6.1 If head will be removed, it should be done by cutting between the base of the head and the first cervical or neck bone.

5.6.2 The front feet should be cut at the junction between the carpus (feet) and the radius and ulna (foreleg).

5.7 Evisceration

5.7.1 The breastbone should be split down the middle.

5.7.2 An incision should be made in the abdominal cavity wall just above the cud fat or udder. The fingers of the other hand should be inserted to guard the viscera as the cut is continued to the brisket.

5.7.3 The butcher should avoid puncturing certain parts such as viscera, urinary bladder, gall bladder or uterus.

5.7.4 Once the viscera are withdrawn out, the esophagus should be pulled down with the diaphragm including the heart, lungs, and liver.

5.8 Post-mortem Inspection

The post-mortem inspection shall be in accordance with DC No. 1, series of 2014 (Revised IRR of R.A. no. 9296, otherwise as “The meat inspection code of the Philippines”, as amended by R.A. 10536) and AO 35, series of 2021 (Rules and regulations on humane and hygienic slaughter, and meat inspection of rabbit for food).

5.9 Cutting of Hind Feet

Carcass should be removed from the shackle by cutting the hind feet at the hock joint, making sure the fur should not be retained on the carcass.

5.10 Washing of Carcass

5.10.1 The individual carcass should be washed to remove all blood, dirt, fur, and other contaminants that may be present of the carcass.

5.10.2 The whole carcass should be disinfected using allowed materials such as hypochlorite and others.

6 Chilling

Chilling of rabbit carcass shall be in accordance with DA-NMIS AO 5, series of 2012 (Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of newly slaughtered meat in meat markets) and DA-NMIS AO 6, series of 2012 (Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of chilled, frozen, and thawed meat in meat markets).

7 Transport and Delivery

Transport and delivery should be in accordance with DA-NMIS AO 5, series of 2012 (Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of newly slaughtered meat in meat markets) and DA-NMIS AO 6, series of 2012 (Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of chilled, frozen, and thawed meat in meat markets).

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