

**PHILIPPINE
NATIONAL
STANDARD**

**PNS/BAFS 403:2025
ICS 67.120.10**

Rabbit Carcass — Product Standard — Grading



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Foreword

In 2020, the DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) submitted a proposal to develop a standard for grading rabbit carcasses to improve the post-production and marketing system. This proposal is consistent with the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS)-Department of Agriculture (DA) Administrative Order (AO) No. 35, series of 2021 (*Rules and regulations on humane and hygienic slaughter, and inspection of rabbit for food*), which requires that the rabbit to be slaughtered shall be sourced from Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP)-certified farms or practicing GAHP. In response, the DA-BAFS-Standards Development Division (SDD) subjected the proposal to a pre-assessment process and prioritization criteria. Upon meeting the required rating, the development of Rabbit Carcass — Product Standard — Grading was included in the work priorities for 2025 in accordance with the DA-BAFS-SDD Quality Management System (QMS) procedure. To support the development of PNS on Rabbit Carcass — Product Standard — Grading, the DA-BAFS-Standards Research Division (SRD) conducted a comparative evaluation of the classification and grading systems in the Philippines against the United States and the European Union.

Several meetings and stakeholder consultations were conducted to draft and finalize the PNS before its endorsement to the DA Secretary with the guidance of a Technical Working Group (TWG) in 2024-2025. The TWG was officially created through the DA-Special Order (SO) No. 745, series of 2025 (Creation of the TWG and Project Management Team [PMT] for the Development of the PNS for Agricultural and Fishery Products and Machinery).

The TWG was composed of representatives from the relevant government agencies, academe/research institutions, private sector organizations, and Civil Society Organizations (CSO). This document was drafted in accordance with the formatting and editorial rules of the DA-BAFS-SDD Standardization Guide No. 1: Writing the PNS.

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1 Scope

This Standard covers fresh, fresh chilled, or fresh frozen rabbit carcasses intended for markets, direct human consumption, or for further processing. It covers provisions on food safety and quality requirements and the nutritional composition of rabbit meat. This Standard does not apply to rabbit carcasses with skin and primal cuts.

2 Normative References

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

Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS)-Department of Agriculture (DA). (2022). General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed (PNS/BAFS 194:2022)

BAFS-DA. (2022). Prepackaged fresh chilled and fresh frozen meat — Product standard — Labeling (PNS/BAFS 339:2022)

BAFS-DA. (2022). Veterinary drug residues in food — Product standard — Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) (PNS/BAFS 48:2022)

BAFS-DA. (2023). Primary and postharvest food and feed — Product standard — Microbiological criteria (PNS/BAFS 372:2023)

National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS)–Department of Agriculture (DA). (2012). Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of chilled, frozen, and thawed meat in meat markets. (DA Administrative Order No. 6, series of 2012).

<https://nmis.gov.ph/images/pdf/ao-06-2012.pdf>

NMIS–DA. (2012). Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of newly slaughtered meat in meat markets. (DA Administrative Order No. 5, series of 2012).

<https://nmis.gov.ph/images/pdf/ao-05-2012.pdf>

3 Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this Standard, the following definition shall apply:

3.1 carcass

body of any slaughtered animal after bleeding and dressing (Department of Agriculture [DA], 2010)

3.2**competent authority**

government authority or official body authorized by the government that is responsible for the setting of regulatory food safety requirements and/or for the organization of official controls, including enforcement (Codex Alimentarius Commission [CAC], 2022)

3.3**contusion**

injury to a muscle caused by a direct blow, resulting in disruption of muscle fibers and their blood supply (Lowe and Chaitow, 2009)

3.4**freezer-burn**

characteristics of the surface of the carcass or meat due to loss of moisture during freezing, resulting in dry, grainy-textured white or brown colored spots visible on the meat surface (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], n.d., *modified*)

3.5**labeling**

includes any written, printed, or graphic matter that is present on the label, accompanies the food, or is displayed near the food, including that for the purpose of promoting its sale or disposal (CAC, 1991; DA-DOH, 2015)

4 Minimum requirements

4.1 All rabbit carcasses shall originate from healthy animals slaughtered in establishments subject to official approval and official control systems applied according to food safety and inspection rules from the competent authority (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [UNECE], 2013).

4.2 In all classes, rabbit carcasses shall be (UNECE, 2013):

- a) intact, without head, feet, tail, and skin, taking into account the presentation;
- b) free from any visible foreign matter (e.g., dirt, wood, plastic, metal particles);
- c) free of offensive odors;
- d) free of contusions; and
- e) free of freezer-burn.

5 Classification

Rabbit carcasses are classified into three classes as defined below based on the quality attributes (USDA, 2002; Michigan State University, 2017). The quality attributes described in each classification are shown in Annex A (Classification of rabbit carcasses)

5.1 Class I

Rabbit carcasses in this class shall have the following quality requirements:

- a) no sign of blood clots due to mishandling prior to and during slaughtering; and
- b) the ends of the cut leg bones should be free from sharp edges.

5.2 Class II

Rabbit carcasses in this class shall have the following quality requirements:

- a) no sign of incomplete bleeding, except for an occasional and slight clot; and
- b) the ends of the cut leg bones may be broken or with presence of sharp edges due to the removal of the feet.

5.3 Class III

This class includes rabbit carcasses that do not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes, but satisfy the minimum requirements specified in Clause 4. The following, however, may be allowed, provided the rabbit carcasses retain their essential characteristics:

- a) slightly reddened flesh caused by blood clotting in the connective tissues;
- b) moderate bruises, defects, and deformities; and
- c) broken ends of leg bones caused by the removal of the feet, but there should be no more than one broken bone in addition to this.

The defects and deformities shall not, in any case, affect the rabbit carcasses.

6 Carcass Classification

The classification for rabbit carcasses should be in accordance with Table 1.

Table 1. Grading for rabbit carcasses (USDA, 2002; Michigan State University, 2017)

Category	Carcass Weight (kg)	Age (weeks)	General Description
Fryer	1.1-1.3	12-16	The flesh is tender with a fine texture and a bright, pearly white color.
Roaster	1.3-1.5	17-32	The flesh is firmer than Fryer. It is also slightly darker with a coarser texture.

Category	Carcass Weight (kg)	Age (weeks)	General Description
Stewer	>1.6	>33	Carcass is generally firmer, contains more fat, and is coarse.
Unclassified	-	-	Carcasses that do not qualify as 'Fryer', 'Roaster', or 'Stewer'

7 Contaminants

The rabbit carcasses shall conform to contaminant limits and levels based on the following PNS:

- a) Microbiological contaminants - limits set in PNS/BAFS 372:2023 (Primary and postharvest food and feed — Product standard — Microbiological criteria);
- b) Chemical contaminants - Maximum Levels (ML) set in PNS/BAFS 194:2022 (General standard for contaminants and toxins in food and feed); and
- c) Veterinary drugs - Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) set in PNS/BAFS 48:2022 (Veterinary drug residues in food — Product standard — MRL).

8 Labeling

Where applicable, labeling of rabbit carcasses shall meet the requirements of the following standards and regulations:

- a) PNS/BAFS 339:2022 (Prepackaged fresh chilled and fresh frozen meat — Product standard — Labeling); and
- b) PNS/BAFS 384:2024 (Packaged primary and postharvest foods — Product standard — Labelling);
- c) DA Administrative Order (AO) No. 5, series of 2012 (Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of newly slaughtered meat in meat markets); and
- d) DA AO No. 6, series of 2012 (Rules and regulations on hygienic handling of chilled, frozen, and thawed meat in meat markets).

9 Nutritional Composition

Information on the nutritional composition is shown in Annex B (Nutritional composition of rabbit meat) based on the Philippine Food Composition Table of 2019 (Food and Nutrition Research Institute-Department of Science and Technology [FNRI-DOST], 2019).

Annex A
(Informative)

Classification of Rabbit Carcasses

A.1. Class I

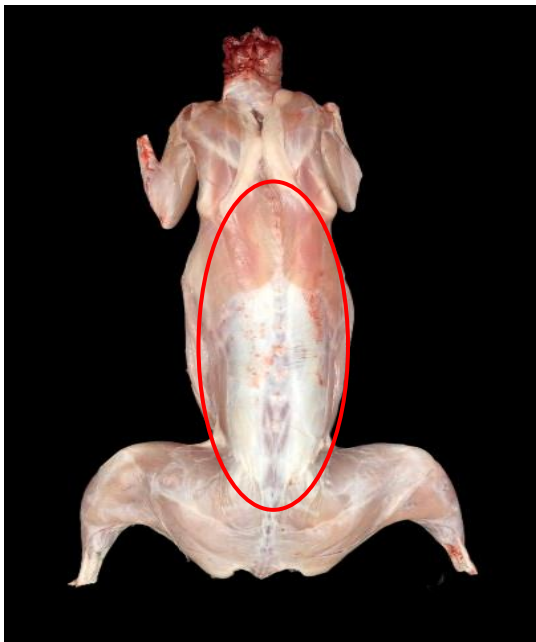


No sign of blood clot



No presence of sharp edges

A.2 Class II

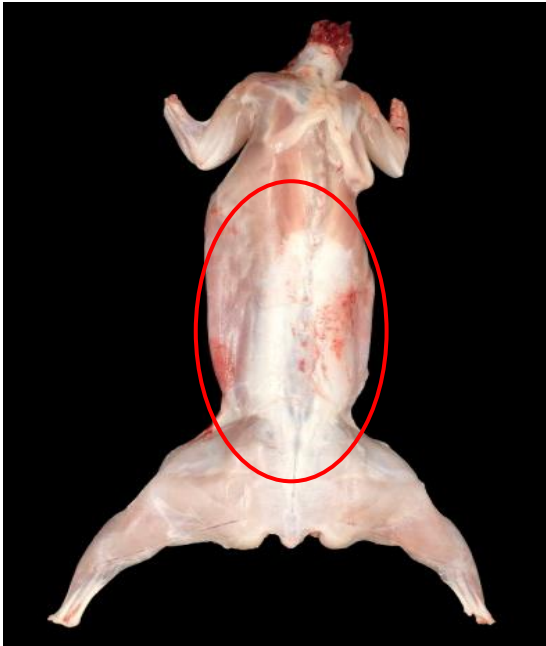


With presence of slight clot



With presence of sharp edges

A.3 Class III



Slightly reddened flesh



Broken ends of leg bones

Annex B
(Informative)

Nutritional composition of rabbit meat (DOST-FNRI, 2019)

Nutrients	Value
Proximate	
Water (g)	78.4
Energy, calculated (kcal)	94
Protein (g)	18.2
Total Fat (g)	2.4
Carbohydrate, total (g)	0.0
Ash, total (g)	1.1
Other Carbohydrates	
Fiber, total dietary (g)	0.0
Sugars, total (g)	0.0
Minerals	
Calcium, Ca (mg)	34
Phosphorus, P (mg)	182
Iron, Fe (mg)	1.4
Sodium, Na (mg)	41
Vitamins	
Retinol (µg)	10
beta-Carotene (µg)	0.0
VIT A, RAE (µg)	10
Thiamin, Vitamin B1 (mg)	0.06
Riboflavin, Vitamin B2 (mg)	0.11
Niacin (mg)	8.8

Nutrients	Value
Ascorbic Acid, Vitamin C (mg)	0.0
Lipids	
Fatty acids, saturated, total (g)	0.716
Fatty acids, monounsaturated, total (g)	0.650
Fatty acids, polyunsaturated, total(g)	0.466
Cholesterol (mg)	54
NOTE The values indicated were computed per 100g of edible portion of rabbit meat.	

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**Philippine National Standard (PNS) on Rabbit Carcass — Product Standard —
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