



**CONNECTICUT**  
**FOR**  
**ANIMALS**  
Education Fund 501(c)(3)

# RABBIT FARMING

## THE PROBLEM

*CT is at-risk for large-scale rabbit farming for meat.*

In 2022, the CT Department of Agriculture unsuccessfully initiated legislature for a program that would allow the processing of thousands of rabbits for food. Similar legislation came up in 2024. Changes to the legislation could make it easier for the mass slaughter of rabbits for meat to take place in Connecticut.



### **Increased disease transmission and public health risk**

A 2020 study titled *Livestock-Associated (MRSA) in Purulent Subcutaneous Lesions of Farm Rabbits* describes the 24% prevalence rate of MRSA infections in slaughterhouse rabbits. The close-keeping, inhumane conditions and slaughterhouses are a breeding ground for this infection that is transferred to humans through consumption of contaminated rabbit meat. MRSA-infected rabbits often present no symptoms and would require routine and costly culturing of all rabbits ante-mortem to ensure that MRSA was not present. Additionally, there is the threat of RHDV2 to both wild and domestic rabbits, should an outbreak occur at one of these facilities.

### **Rabbits are exempt from USDA protections**

The USDA does not include rabbits in its definition of livestock; therefore, they are not protected by their laws and regulations. Because the Humane Methods of Slaughter act does not apply to rabbits, there are no standards that require rabbits to be rendered unconscious prior to their slaughter. This could result in rabbits being subjected to some of the worst forms of cruelty of all farmed animals.

### **FAST FACTS:**

- They are the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common family pet.
- They are intelligent, social and curious beings.
- Rabbits are slaughtered at 8-12 weeks old.
- Rabbits emit more carbon than chicken and pork.
- It takes an estimated 4 lbs of feed to make one pound of rabbit meat.
- Whole Foods stopped selling rabbit meat after concluding that there was no market for sales.
- 24% prevalence rate for MRSA infections in slaughterhouse rabbits.
- RHDV2 is a highly contagious rabbit virus, killing up to 80% of rabbits infected.
- Visible signs RHDV2 of the virus are rare.
- RHDV2 can be spread through direct contact, equipment, contaminated materials, dogs and more. The virus can survive extreme temperatures.
- A notable outbreak of RHDV2 in CT in 2022.

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## THE SOLUTION

*Connecticut should avoid advancing rabbit meat farming and support innovative, planet-friendly economic development opportunities.*

Education plays an important role in creating awareness on the health risks and inhumane treatment associated with rabbit meat farming. The state should be encouraged to seek out innovative business ideas that are better for the environment and all its inhabitants instead of expanding into dangerous farming practices. Additionally, the demand from the public for more plant-based foods and products continues to increase. Many restaurants now carry a variety of plant-based foods and offer meat alternative protein options.

## RESOURCES

[Livestock-Associated MRSA in Purulent Subcutaneous Lesions of Farm Rabbits \(mdpi.com\)](#)  
[fs-rhdv2.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#)  
[Inside the Dark World of Rabbit Farming](#)  
[What is the Humane Slaughter Act? How does it protect animals? \(thehumaneleague.org\)](#)