

Female breeding rabbits shall be housed in enriched parks from 1 January 2025 with the exception of the period within which individual housing is permitted, to be determined by the minister. The following regulations apply to such enriched parks:

- contains a minimum of 3 animals, minimum surface area: 6000 cm² per breeding rabbit;
- one of the sides is at least 1.80 m long;
- platform (no wire mesh);
- the platform surface area is included in the calculation of the available surface area, up to a maximum of 40% of the surface area and insofar as the height beneath the platform is at least 25 cm;
- the park roof is open above at least 60% of the floor surface area;
- if the park is equipped with wire mesh flooring, at least 60% of the surface is covered with foot mats or comfort zones/mats;
- enrichment material (already mandatory in current legislation);
- nesting material (already mandatory in current legislation);
- minimum surface area of the nesting box: 800 cm².

The minimum length for one of the sides and the minimum group size are not applicable during the period that the animals are housed individually.

The breeder adopts measures to limit aggression between rabbits, such as working with stable groups and genetic selection as much as possible.

Male breeding rabbits shall be housed in enriched parks for male breeding rabbits from January 1, 2021. The following regulations apply to such enriched parks:

- individual housing is permitted;
- minimum surface area: 6000 cm²/animal;
- minimum park height: 60 cm (at least 80% of the park's floor surface is at least 60 cm high);
- platform (no wire mesh). The surface area of the platform is included in the calculation of the available surface area, up to a maximum of 40% of the surface area and insofar as the height below the platform is at least 25 cm;
- if the park is equipped with a wire mesh floor, at least 60% of the surface is covered with foot mats or comfort zones or mats;
- enrichment material (already mandatory in current legislation).

Female non-pregnant breeding rabbits (breeding rabbits that appear to be non-pregnant following insemination in the period between weaning the preceding up until the subsequent litter) shall be housed in enriched parks for female non-pregnant breeding rabbits from 1 January 2021. The following regulations apply to such an enriched park:

- individual housing is permitted;
- minimum surface area: 4500 cm²/animal;
- minimum park height: 60 cm (at least 80%ⁱ of the park's floor surface is at least 60 cm high);
- platform (no wire mesh). The platform surface area is included in the calculation of the available surface area, up to a maximum of 40% of the surface area and insofar as the height below the platform is at least 25 cm;
- if the park is equipped with wire mesh flooring, at least 60% of the surface is covered with foot mats or comfort zones/mats;
- enrichment material (already mandatory in current legislation).

Instead of 2021, the Council does not anticipate a full transition to does in parks until 2025. Rabbit farmers who are renewing their facility can consequently invest in parks and rabbit farmers who recently invested in enriched cages for does will not have a competitive advantage.

The Council also requests the initiation of scientific research on optimising group housing for does. This research must guide the transition to keeping does in parks and, amongst other things, examine the optimal period for group housing in terms of the breeding females' welfare. A guidance committee comprising stakeholders and scientists must supervise this project.

The definition of an enriched park for meat rabbits must also be amended in the current legislation, so that, instead of 80%, at least 60% of the surface area is covered with foot mats or comfort zones/mats. This amendment ensures more hygienic housing and affords the rabbits the option of relaxing in a cool place. An amendment is also required for the park roof, to the effect that at least 60% of the floor surface is open instead of 'open'. Thus modular parks (combi-parks) are used in which the does give birth and the young remain after weaning. This offers benefits both in terms of welfare and hygiene (all-in/all-out system).

ⁱ Footnote: The Belgian Farmers' Union wishes to reduce the percentage from 80% to 50% so that the housing for female breeding rabbits and non-pregnant breeding rabbits is compatible and can be converted. The number of pregnant breeding rabbits in a group varies over time; the unused places for does with young can subsequently be used for non-pregnant does. This is necessary for realising economic, profitable and competitive housing.

Since it can stand up straight, it additionally guarantees the welfare of the rabbit.