

## BOOK REVIEW

**L'allevamento ecologico del coniglio (Organic rabbit farming). A. Finzi and G. Mariani. Edagricole, Milano, Italy. 130 pp. Language: Italian.**

Price: € 14; ISBN 978-88-506-5367-6.

Since the expansion of industrial rabbit farming, little attention has been paid to traditional and alternative rabbit farming systems. However, these systems are relevant in developing countries as a means of ensuring food security as well as in developed countries, mainly as a way to produce high quality meat rabbits in an organic farming scheme. This book, unique in its field, fills the gap in the scientific and technical bibliography on alternative rabbit farming.

The authors have broad expertise in the field. Alessandro Finzi, ex-Full professor of Rabbit Farming at the University of Tuscia (Viterbo, Italy) and ex-President of the World Rabbit Science Association, founded the Rabbit Unconventional Rearing Centre at this University and the homonymous Centre of the Farmers' Consortium "Coniglio Verde Leprino of Viterbo". Finzi has dedicated his life to the applied research and development of alternative rabbit farming. Giorgio Mariani is Coordinator of this consortium and responsible for their applied research lines.

The book provides useful information organised in 9 chapters:

- The first, "Le caratteristiche della coniglicoltura alternativa e un po' di storia" (Characteristics of alternative rabbit farming and some historical notes), frames alternative rabbit farming as those systems carried out in the open air, thus eliminating the closed sheds typical of industrial farming. Moreover, this chapter describes the features of these systems from several points of view: the farm and its management, meat qualities and marketing attributes.
- Chapter 2, "Riproduzione" (Reproduction), the longest of all, describes the main traditional and alternative rabbit farming systems: improved enclosures, well systems, outdoors cages and the most efficient: the underground cell system. For these keeping systems, details on how to construct and manage the units are provided.
- Chapter 3, "Ingrasso" (Fattening), describes two main systems for keeping fattening rabbits: wire-mesh cages kept in the open air, and mobile cages that are moved periodically onto grassland as a way to control coccidiosis.
- Chapter 4, "Genetica" (Genetics), explains that in alternative rabbit farming, breeds rather than hybrids must be used, and internal replacement is carried out to maintain the breeding stock. The Leprino of Viterbo breed is also described, the only one in the world that has been specifically selected for outdoor rearing.

- Sanitary control in alternative rabbit farming systems is analysed in Chapter 5, “Controllo sanitario” (Sanitary control). This control is based on dilution of the microbial load in outdoor environments, the stamping out of pathogens and strict cleaning and disinfection practices to avoid the need for pharmacological treatments.
- Chapter 6, “Tecniche di gestione” (Management techniques), explains how to run smaller rabbitries, as the alternative farms usually are, efficiently. It emphasises the records to be taken and proposes a simply and efficient management system based on a weekly agenda.
- Problems related to marketing strategies are studied in Chapter 7, “Promozione e commercio” (Promotion and marketing). In addition, this chapter explains how these alternative systems can be promoted by attending fairs, visiting demonstration farms, engaging in education and outreach activities, etc.
- Chapter 8, “Paesi in via di sviluppo” (Developing countries) deals with one of the most relevant applications of alternative rabbit farming systems: the use of low-input systems that enable animals to minimise thermal stress and their contribution to food safety and income integration in rural communities.
- Finally, the last chapter, “Applicazioni nel sociale” (Social applications), demonstrates how it is possible to successfully apply alternative rabbit farming systems in occupational programmes aimed at disabled people or similar cases.

This book, which is well illustrated with 80 figures, represents an authoritative review of the subject that is particularly useful for university students, researchers, professors, advisors and professionals interested in alternative rabbit farming and its application in development cooperation programmes.

*Pedro González-Redondo*  
*Animal Science Section. Department of Agroforestry Sciences, ETSIA,*  
*University of Seville, Carretera de Utrera km 1, 41013 Seville, Spain*  
*E-mail address: [pedro@us.es](mailto:pedro@us.es)*