List of Contents

Abstract	1
Resumen	3
Resum	5
General Introduction	7
Feeding the future: the role of technology and efficiency	10
Human dietary requirements: the role of meat and meat products	11
Rabbit meat as a sustainable protein source	12
Farm Animals by design: The role of genetics.	13
Livestock Robustness: The Role of Resource Allocation	16
Paternal rabbit lines	17
The Robust Path to Sustainability	18
References	20
Objectives	27
Justification	29
Hypothesis and Objectives	29
Chapter I: Reproductive performance of rabbit females from three	
paternal lines with a different potential for growth rate and	
resilience.	31
Abstract	33
Introduction	34
Materials and Methods	35
Animals	35
Animals' housing, diets and management	36
Blood sampling and plasma chemical analysis	37
Statistical analysis	38
Results	39
Reproductive performance of rabbit females	39
Litter traits	44
Discussion	46
Effect of genetic type on females' reproductive performance	46
Effect of genetic type on the performance of the litter	51

Conclusions	52
Acknowledgements	53
References	53
Chapter II: Growth performance of three paternal rabbit lines with	
different potentials for growth rate and resilience.	57
Abstract	59
Introduction	60
Materials and methods	61
Animals	61
Experimental procedure	62
Chemical analysis	63
Statistical analysis	63
Results	63
Discussion	66
Conclusions	69
Acknowledgements	69
References	69
Chapter III: Immunological studies on new rabbit paternal lines	
with a different potential for growth rate and resilience. Pathways	
towards healthier animals.	73
Abstract	75
Introduction	76
Materials and methods	77
Animals and experimental procedure	77
Immunophenotypic characterisation of peripheral blood by flow	
cytometry	78
Determination of haptoglobin	79
Purification of PMN and macrophages	80
Phagocytosis of PMN and macrophages	80
Statistical analysis	81
Results	81
Discussion	87
Conclusions	

Acknowledgements	91
References	91
General Discussion	95
R vs RF	97
Female rabbits	97
Growing rabbits	99
R vs RFLP	99
Female rabbits	99
Growing rabbits	101
References	102
Conclusions	105
Short curriculum vitae	109

List of Tables

Table	Short description	Page
1.1	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) on the reproductive	
	performance of rabbit females until the third parturition.	40
1.2	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) on the performance	
	of the litters during lactation until the third parturition	44
1.3	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) on the average blood	
	metabolites concentration in rabbit females from first mating	
	to the third parturition	47
2.1	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) on the productive	
	performance of growing rabbits from 28 to 63 days of age	64
2.2	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RLP) on the faecal	
	digestibility coefficient of growing rabbits from 56 to 63 days of	
	age	64
2.3	Effect of the genetic type (R, RF, RFLP) on the animals' health	
	status from 28 to 63 days of age	66
3.1	Monoclonal antibodies used for flow cytometry	79
3.2	Effect of genetic type and physiological state on the	
	percentage of leukocytes in the blood of rabbit females	83
3.3	Effect of the genetic type on the percentage of leukocytes in	
	weaned rabbits.	84
3.4	Pearson coefficients for the correlations between leukocyte	
	populations of females and kits at weaning	86

List of Figures

Figure	Short description	Page
1.1	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) and parity order on	
	the body weight of rabbit females at parturition	39
1.2	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) and year season on	
	the perirenal fat thickness of rabbit females at first mating	41
1.3	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) and parity order on	
	the daily feed intake and milk yield of rabbit females from 18	
	to 28 days post-partum	42
1.4	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) and day post	
	parturition on the litter size and individual kit weight during the	
	first two lactation	43
1.5	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) and day post	
	parturition on blood concentration of leptin from the first	
	mating to the third parturition.	45
1.6	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) and day post	
	parturition on blood concentration of glutamine and glutamate	
	from the first mating to the third parturition.	48
2.1	Cumulated mortality (%) throughout the growing period in	
	function of the genetic type (R, RF and RFLP).	65
3.1	Effect of genetic type (R, RF and RFLP) on the percentage of	
	monocytes of rabbit females from the first AI to weaning	84
3.2	Evolution of females' survival from the first AI to the second	
	parturition.	85
4.1	Radial plot comparing the main characteristics of R and RF	
	lines	98
4.2	Radial plot comparing the main characteristics of R and RFLP	
	lines.	101