

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6252

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, January 30, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to rabbits.

**Brief Description:** Creating a temporary permit for the sale of one thousand or fewer rabbits.

**Sponsors:** Senators Morton and Schoesler.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 1/23/06, 1/30/06 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6252 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Jacobsen, Morton and Sheldon.

**Staff:** Sam Thompson (786-7413)

**Background:** Federal Law. While Congress has not mandated inspection of rabbits under U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-administered meat inspection or food safety laws, the agency does conduct voluntary inspection of rabbits for signs of disease. Disease-free animals may qualify for an "Inspected for Wholesomeness by USDA" mark of inspection. Rabbit meat shipped in interstate commerce may be subject to inspection by the Food and Drug Administration.

State Law. Some states, including Washington, permit sale of rabbit only from licensed rabbit processing facilities. Under the Washington Food Processing Act (Act), a person may not operate a food processing plant or process foods without obtaining a license from the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). The Act broadly defines "food processing" as the handling or processing of any food in any manner in preparation for sale for human consumption, with certain exceptions. The Act also allows WSDA to require persons processing food for retail sale to be licensed if they are not subject to local health permitting, licensure, or inspection.

In 2003, the Act was amended to authorize, in lieu of a license, a special, temporary permit for annually slaughtering, preparing, and selling 1,000 or fewer pastured chickens for sale, by the producer, of whole raw chickens directly to the ultimate consumer at the producer's farm. The 2003 legislation also exempted these activities from custom slaughter laws, which establish licensing and facility requirements for persons slaughtering and preparing uninspected meat as a service for the animal or meat owner. Pursuant to a grant of regulatory authority, WSDA adopted sanitary, inspection, and other requirements for these special, temporary permits.

It is suggested that a similar program be adopted for sale of rabbit meat.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The Washington Food Processing Act (Act) is amended to authorize a WSDA-issued special, temporary permit for the slaughter, preparation, and sale of 1,000 or fewer rabbits a year by the producer for sale of whole raw rabbits directly to the ultimate consumer at the producer's farm.

These activities cannot be conducted without the permit, but are exempt from the Act's other licensing requirements and from custom slaughter laws.

WSDA must adopt sanitary regulations generally patterned after State Board of Health regulations for temporary food service establishments. Regulations must also identify the length of time a permit is valid, accommodating the seasonal nature of permitted activities and considering economic constraints on regulated activity. WSDA must conduct inspections reasonably necessary to ensure compliance with permit requirements.

The fee for the special permit is \$75.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** A technical revision corrects a reference to State Board of Health regulations for temporary food service establishments.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Sales of small batches of rabbit should be subject to the same health regulation as sales of small batches of chickens, allowing farmers, 4-H groups, and others to conduct on-farm sales to consumers without having to invest in prohibitively expensive processing facilities.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testimony Other:** There may be other, currently-authorized options for sale of small batches of rabbit by producers, including processing by licensed mobile processors or custom slaughter facilities.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Sen. Morton, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Claudia Coles, WSDA.