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## Evaluation of the Effect of Milk Thistle (*Silybum marianum*) Supplement on Fattening Performance and Health Status of Broiler Rabbits

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### Abstract

Production of broiler rabbits, as a very dietetic type of meat with low content of fat and cholesterol, could be a very important source of high quality protein for human nutrition. It seems that the use of phytoadditives and their extracts in rabbit breeding offers an acceptable way to improve welfare and health of animals. Milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*) extract contains silymarin - flavolignans, with hepatoprotective and canceroprotective properties, neurodegenerative and neurotoxic repressing functions. The aim of this study was to evaluate the influence of milk thistle fruit extract in Silyfeed®Basic supplement on the growth of broiler rabbits and their health status. There were 120 HYL A broiler rabbits divided into three groups in the experimental university farm (Czech University of Life Sciences Prague). Animals were fed by a standard diet for rabbit fattening without any supplement (group I), and with the supplement of 0.2% Silyfeed®Basic for group II and 1% for group III. The experiment started at 42 days of rabbit age and finished when achieved 2.6 kg of live weight. No statistical significant differences were found between control and experimental groups for the parameters growth performance and the carcass yield. Morbidity and mortality were significantly lower in group III (1% of Silyfeed®Basic). Also blood biochemistry, especially parameters for liver metabolism, and liver tissues showed no statistical significant differences between the groups. These tests will continue, but first results show that 1% of the milk thistle extract supplemented in the feed ration for broiler rabbits could be a suitable substitute for chemical drugs commonly used.

**Keywords:** Growth performance, health status, metabolism, rabbits, *Silybum marianum*