

The European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) was introduced for hunting purposes in Republic of Moldova

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Abstract. The short note relates a case of introducing the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) to Codru town, near Chişinău (Republic of Moldova).

Key Words: non-native, *O. cuniculus*, colonizer, hunting.

The European rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, is a widespread colonizer and is considered a pest outside its natural range, where eradication of the rabbit is priority for conservation. According to IUCN, the *O. cuniculus* is native only to: Algeria, France, Gibraltar, Morocco, Portugal and Spain (Oroian et al 2014).

O. cuniculus was introduced or re-introduced in Romania for hunting purposes (in the 19th and 20th centuries). Small colonies of rabbits were founded in the following counties: Alba, Bacău, Botoşani, Braşov, Buzău, Covasna, Dolj, Iaşi, Ilfov, Maramureş, Mureş, Prahova, Sibiu, Timiş and Vâlcea. However, these populations have almost disappeared due to the nature of the soil, cold winters, predators and pathogens (Oroian et al 2014).

The Association of Hunters and Fishermen from the Republic of Moldova, in cooperation with the famous Polish company Biogospodarstvo, which, among many others, deals with the propagation of hunting animals, including mouflons, northern elk, different species of deer etc, introduced *O. cuniculus* in the wild for hunting purposes in the Republic of Moldova. The rabbits were released in a forest near Codru, a town located near Chişinău, after preliminary habitat arrangements (Codru 2015).

We believe that the population will only perpetuate with artificial support from the Hunters and Fishermen Association.

References

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