

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2



Guidance for Rabbit Shows and Fairs



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What is Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease?

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus serotype 2 (RHDV2) is a highly lethal infectious disease of all domestic and wild rabbits. It is not a human health risk. RHDV2 was diagnosed in domestic rabbits in OH (2018), WA (2019), and NY (2020) and was confirmed for the first time in wild rabbits in several southwestern states and Mexico in 2020. RHDV2 is transmitted by infected rabbits in their urine, feces, and respiratory secretions, therefore commingling rabbits at shows and events presents a risk for RHDV2 transmission. The virus is spread via direct contact with infected rabbits and through indirect contact with objects or beings potentially contaminated with the virus (e.g., food, bedding, water, cages, clothing, humans, dogs, etc.). RHDV2 may remain infectious for months on surfaces and in the environment but is inactivated by a 10% bleach solution.

Status of Rabbit Shows and Fairs

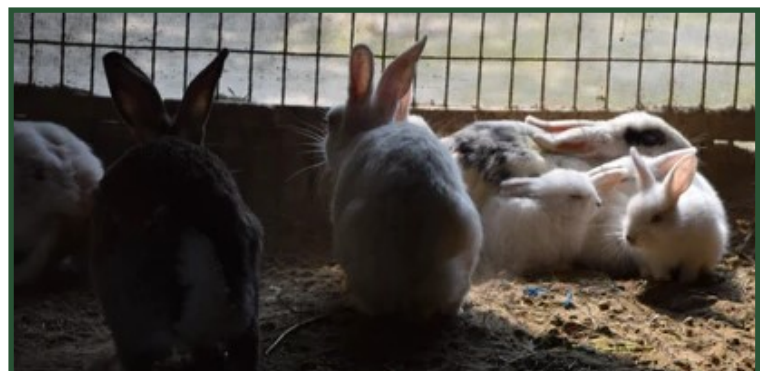
- The American Rabbit Breeders Association has asked all breeders in affected states to voluntarily recognize a herd quarantine until RHDV2 infections are effectively managed.
- Breeders in these areas are also encouraged to enact strict biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of their herds contracting this deadly virus.
- Even though RHDV2 has not yet been detected in Virginia, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) recommend that event organizers consider extra precautionary measures to minimize the risk of viral transmission.

Entry Preventative Measures

- **Certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs):** CVIs should be required 3-5 days prior to entry at an event.
- **Out-of-state participants:** Out-of-state participants should check with their state animal health officials prior to leaving for the event to determine the requirements for the return of rabbits to their home state after the event.
- **Examination of all incoming rabbits:** A qualified, licensed, and accredited veterinarian should be on site to oversee the examination process.
 - * If any rabbits are suspected of having RHDV2, the animals should not be permitted to enter the event and must be reported to the State Veterinarian's office at 804-692-0601.

Judging and Showing Preventative Measures

- Judges and veterinarians should change gloves and wash hands/arms between animals.
- Judges should wear short sleeves and avoid picking up animals.
- Avoid sharing show carpets and designate one carpet per animal.



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Premises Control Measures

- Discourage use of shared equipment, grooming tools, exercise areas, etc. between participants.
- Ensure there is appropriate spacing between cages so there is no contact between rabbits.
- Encourage participants to wash their hands before and after handling rabbits and arrive at the show or event each day with clean clothing and clean/disinfected footwear.
- Recommend thorough and regular cleaning and disinfection of cages, food and water bowls, etc.
- Remind participants to change clothes and footwear and wash their hands after returning home and before caring for their own rabbits.
- Fence off the show area from non-spectators.
- Regularly observe all rabbits for clinical signs of RHDV2.
 - * Separate and isolate any sick rabbits.
- Report suspect RHDV2 cases to the State Veterinarian's Office 804-692-0601.
- Do not release domestic rabbits into the wild.
 - * This practice is illegal and can spread disease.

Disinfection Protocol

- Remove all organic debris by scrubbing items with soap and detergent. Rinse and allow to dry.
- Use a 10% bleach (sodium hypochlorite) solution.
 - * Mix 1/2 cup 6% or 8.25% household bleach in 1 gallon of water.
- Ensure contact time is at least 10 minutes.
- Wear gloves and eye protection when mixing the solution and work in a well ventilated area.

Clinical Signs

- Rabbits often die suddenly with no outward signs of illness.
- Infected animals may show signs of fever, lack of appetite, lethargy, muscle spasms, difficulty breathing, blue-tinged lips, and may bleed from various body cavities.

Vaccine Information

- At this time, there is no RHDV2 vaccine available for use in domestic rabbits in Virginia.

Additional Resources

- **Center for Food Security & Public Health (general facts):** http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabbit_hemorrhagic_disease.pdf
- **USDA (general facts):** https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf
- **USDA (cleaning and disinfection procedures):** https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/rabbits/

