



Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Overview and Recommended Validation/Show Practices

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD)

RHD caused by Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) is an extremely contagious viral disease of rabbits. There is a current ongoing outbreak of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus, serotype 2 (RHDV2) in the United States involving several western states including Texas. This outbreak is affecting domestic, feral and wild rabbits and hares. RHDV is not a threat to public health or other animals.

Clinical Signs:

Clinical signs vary but may include lethargy, anorexia, weight loss or sudden death

Incubation period may be from 16-48 hours

Death may occur as soon as 2-3 days after infection

Transmission:

- Nose to nose contact, saliva, urine, feces, exposure to an infected carcass
- Fomites - contaminated bedding, food, water, cages, equipment
- Mechanical vectors - insects and people

Environmental Persistence:

- RHDV2 may persist for long periods of time under a variety of environmental conditions
- RHDV2 can persist for long periods of time in organic debris and material such as infected carcasses or chilled or frozen infected rabbit meat.

General Biosecurity:

- Wash hands before and after interacting with rabbits
- Maintain separate footwear to be used in the Rabbitry
- Keep a closed Rabbitry. If you must introduce new rabbits do so only from known sources and health status.
- Isolate new or returning rabbits for a minimum of 2-3 weeks
- Prevent exposure of domestic rabbits to wild and feral rabbits and hares by using enclosures and fencing and elevated housing
- Do not feed or use for bedding collected outdoor plants or forage
- Control mechanical vectors in the Rabbitry such as insects, rodents, birds and other animals
- Establish a relationship with a knowledgeable veterinarian

Cleaning and Disinfection:

- Remove all debris and organic matter
- Wash cages and equipment with water and detergent then thoroughly rinse away detergent and allow the surface to dry
- Select and apply an effective disinfectant paying close attention to the recommended contact time, then thoroughly rinse away any residual disinfectant and allow the surface to dry

Recommendations for Rabbit Breeders, Clubs and Shows:

- Monitor rabbit health and behavior daily
- Understand how to report a suspect case of RHD in your state

- Elect to opt out of shows/travel with your rabbit(s) if there is an outbreak of RHD in your county
- Be aware of the situation in your state and local community and be flexible
- Educate yourself about the disease and pass that information on to others in your community
- Practice strict biosecurity and cleaning & disinfecting practices at shows and upon return home
- Be aware of the location of origin of your show judges and volunteers
- Have an emergency plan in place for what you will do if an animal shows clinical signs at a show. Share that plan with all staff, volunteers, registrants.
- Post signage for all show attendees about RHD and about proper show biosecurity
 - Do not share feed/water utensils or grooming equipment
 - Do not allow nose to nose contact (space cages as much as possible)
- Validation (tag-in) process may need to be modified in order to reduce potential risk of RHDV2. Some recommendations for consideration:
 - Assign validation time slots for exhibitors to reduce the number present at any one time
 - Exhibitors bring their table pad and dispose of or disinfect when done
 - Validation personnel should wear exam gloves and properly discard after each exhibitor
 - Disinfect table between each exhibitor
 - Disinfect tattoo equipment between each exhibitor
 - Exhibitors should be very conscientious concerning biosecurity when they return home with their rabbits following the validation process

Resources:

[USDA APHIS Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Factsheet](#)

[USDA Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus, Serotype 2 Emerging Risk Notice April 2020](#)

[USDA General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus \(RHDV\) Contaminated Premises](#)

[CFSPH Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease](#)

[Texas Animal Health Commission \(TAHC\) Frequently Asked Questions Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease](#)

[Texas Animal Health Commission \(TAHC\) Biosecurity Guide: Safeguarding your Rabbits](#)

[Texas Parks and Wildlife Department \(TPWD\) Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Information](#)

[American Rabbit Breeders Association Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Website Link](#)

[American Rabbit Breeders Association, Inc. Letter to Membership about RHD](#)

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