



MISSOURI
dept. of
Agriculture

RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE VIRUS 2 (RHDV₂)

for exhibitors

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 (RHDV₂) is a highly contagious and potentially fatal disease that affects both domestic and wild rabbits of all ages. This is a foreign animal disease (FAD) as recognized by the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) and is of high concern in the United States. RHDV₂ has been confirmed in several states.

Often the only clinical sign of the disease is sudden death, possibly with blood stained noses caused by internal bleeding. Other signs include fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, neurologic signs and difficulty breathing. The incubation period for the disease is one to five days.

The virus is spread via direct contact with infected rabbits, as well as their meat or fur. The virus can also be spread indirectly through contact with an infected rabbit's excretions, cages, bedding, feeders, equipment, etc. People can also serve as a fomite in the spread of the virus when handling an infected rabbit or their materials mentioned previously and then carrying the virus to a naïve rabbit. The virus can survive on an object for up to 105 days in dry, room temperatures.

RHDV₂ is not infectious to people or other domestic animals. However, rabbits can carry other diseases such as tularemia or plague, diseases that can cause serious illness in people. Do not handle or consume sick or dead rabbits, and do not allow pets to come into contact with or consume rabbit carcasses.

Guidelines for Rabbit Shows and Events

The movement of live rabbits, especially for shows or fairs, presents a significant risk for spread of the disease due to the commingling of rabbits. If local events take place, MDA recommends that event organizers consider extra precautionary measures to minimize the risk of transmission of RHDV₂.



REPORT SUSPICIOUS CASES

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease is a reportable disease. If suspected, this disease should be immediately reported to the Missouri State Veterinarian's office at (573) 751-3377, or the USDA Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) at (573) 658-9850.

Entry Control Measures

- **Certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs):** CVIs may be required for all rabbits entering a show or event. CVIs will be required for all out of state rabbits. An accredited veterinarian must examine rabbits prior to entry into Missouri. This may not prevent rabbits who could be incubating RHVD2 from developing clinical signs of disease while at an event, so all rabbits should be monitored closely.
- **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 state after the event. A list of contact information for all state animal health officials can be obtained at USAHA.org.
- **Exam of all incoming rabbits:** It is recommended that a qualified, licensed, and accredited veterinarian be on-site to oversee the examination process. Any rabbits exhibiting clinical signs consistent with RHDV2 should be not be permitted to enter the show and must be reported to the Missouri State Veterinarian's office.

Premises Control Measures

- **General biosecurity measures:**
 - Arrive at the show or event with clean clothing and disinfected footwear. After returning home, change clothes and footwear, and wash hands before caring for rabbits.
 - Ensure there is adequate distance between rabbits to prevent nose-to-nose contact. For example, you can keep a cage open between rabbits or consider using partitions between cages.
 - Minimize common water and feed sources during the event.
 - Discourage use of shared equipment and supplies.
 - All participants should wash their hands before and after handling the rabbits. Participants should also only handle their own rabbits.
 - Judges should wear gloves and change gloves between rabbits. Judging areas should be cleaned and disinfected after evaluation of each rabbit.
 - Isolate rabbits returning from a show from other rabbits for a minimum of 10 days. Care for the rabbits in isolation after caring for other rabbits.
- **Cleaning and disinfection:** Cleaning and disinfection is a very important disease control measure. First, clean surfaces well to remove organic material. Second, apply an effective disinfectant. Third, allow 10 minutes of contact time (or as labeled) prior to rinsing and drying. A list of recommended disinfectants is as follows:
 - Sodium hypochlorite (1:10 dilution household bleach)
 - 1% Virkon-S
 - Sodium hydroxide (1%)
 - Beta-propiolactone.
- **Monitoring for health:** Rabbits should be regularly observed for clinical signs of disease by event organizers and event veterinarians. If clinical signs of RHVD2 are suspected, the rabbit should be isolated and reported to the Missouri State Veterinarian's office immediately.



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Rabbit owners who have questions about this disease should contact their veterinarian.

More information on RHDV2 can be found at:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf.

