



Arizona Department of Agriculture

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Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Guidance for Shows and Fairs

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Type 2 (RHDV2) has become an endemic disease in Arizona's wild rabbit population after it was first diagnosed in April 2020. Since then, the disease has been found statewide in both wild and domestic rabbits.

RHDV2 is a highly contagious and potentially lethal disease of rabbits; commingling of rabbits at shows and events could present a risk for transmission of the RHDV2 virus. The decision to continue, postpone, or cancel rabbit shows and events will ultimately be up to the local event organizers. Event organizers are encouraged to provide the Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease fact sheet found on the [AZDA website](#) to exhibitors prior to the event. If an owner is aware of illness or death in their rabbit colony prior to the event, this should be reported to the State Veterinarian's Office and all rabbits from that household should be restricted from entering the event.

At this time, the Arizona State Veterinarian's Office (AZDA) recommends that rabbit owners enact strict biosecurity measures to reduce the opportunity of their colonies to contract this deadly virus. This means that venues and associations that are hosting rabbit shows be vigilant about biosecurity when housing, commingling, and handling groups of rabbits. We recommend that show officials and show veterinarians review biosecurity practices with participants and that any sick or diseased rabbits be banned entry, quarantined, and removed from the premises. The following additional biosecurity strategies may also be implemented:

ENTRY CONTROL MEASURES

Certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs): CVIs should be required 3-5 days prior to entry at an event yet may not identify rabbits who might be incubating RHDV2 from developing clinical signs of disease while 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 state after the event. A list of contact information for all state animal health officials can be obtained from this [document](#).

Exam 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 (602) 542-4293 or email to diseasereporting@azda.gov.

Vaccination: Encouraging vaccination of rabbits attending events may provide an additional level of protection for the commingling of rabbits. RHD vaccination is available on a limited basis in Arizona from veterinarians that have imported vaccine from Europe or have received redistributed vaccines. If you are interested in having your rabbits vaccinated, please contact your veterinarian; our office can be a resource to guide veterinarians in vaccine procurement.

PREMISES CONTROL MEASURES

Minimize common water and feed source use during the event. Discourage use of shared equipment and supplies between participants. Ensure there is appropriate distancing/spacing between cages so there is no contact between rabbits. All participants should wash their hands before and after handling rabbit(s) and arrive at the show or event with clean clothing and clean/disinfected footwear. After returning home, they should change clothes and footwear and wash their hands before caring for their own rabbits. All rabbits that go to the show should be quarantined from rabbits at home for at least 10-14 days.

Thorough cleaning and disinfection are very important at any facility where rabbits are housed. Suggested disinfectants include sodium hypochlorite (1:10 dilution household bleach), substituted phenolics such as 2% One-stroke Environ® (Vestal Lab Inc., St. Louis, MO), and potassium peroxymonosulfate (e.g. 1% Virkon-S by DuPont).

Regular observation of all rabbits for clinical signs of RHDV2 by event organizers during the event. Suspect RHDV2 cases should be isolated and must be reported to the State Veterinarian's Office (602) 542-4293.