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Sent: Tuesday, August 24, 2021 4:34 PM
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Subject: Update: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Outbreak in California
Attachments: Letter - Recommendation Caution for Rabbit Exhibitions in California 05262021.pdf; RHD_Risk_Management_Advice_for_Rabbit_Show_Organizers May 2021.pdf

Hello Fair CEOs and State Rules Committee Members,

This email is to provide an update regarding the Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus serotype 2 (RHDV2) outbreak in California. The RHDV2 virus continues to spread northward in California. On August 19, 2021, RHD was confirmed for the first time in Sonoma and Fresno counties, in domestic rabbits.

Please remember that RHD is a very serious viral disease of rabbits and is extremely contagious. Rabbit owners are urged to:

1. protect their animals by preventing contact with wild rabbits and jackrabbits, and if possible, keep domestic rabbits indoors in areas with known disease,
2. house outdoor rabbits off the ground when possible,
3. practice biosecurity to prevent accidentally spreading the RHDV2 to their rabbits,
4. avoid feeding hay grown or stored outdoors in areas where wild rabbits are affected, and
5. avoid direct or indirect contact between their animals and other rabbits, as healthy rabbits can also spread the disease.

While there is currently no licensed RHDV2 vaccine approved for use in the United States, CDFA is allowing California licensed veterinarians to import European vaccines to protect against RHDV2. Veterinarians may send an email to AHBFeedback@cdfa.ca.gov to receive an approval letter and instructions on how to apply for a USDA import vaccine.

Please report dead domestic rabbits to CDFA at (909) 947-4462. Consult your private veterinarian if your domestic rabbit is sick. Please report dead wild rabbits to the California Department of Fish & Wildlife at (916) 358-2790 or <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Laboratories/Wildlife-Health/Monitoring/Mortality-Report>.

Attached please see an advisory letter, Recommended Caution for Rabbit Exhibitions in California from the CDFA State Veterinarian, Dr. Annette Jones and RHD Advice for Rabbit Show Organizers.

For more information about RHD visit the CDFA Animal Health Branch [website](#), or contact the CDFA Animal Health Branch at (916) 900-5333.

Please ensure that this information is shared with the fair board at the next regularly scheduled board meeting listed as an item of correspondence.

Thanks

Mike

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF

FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

Recommended Caution for California Rabbit Exhibitions

May 26, 2021

Dear Rabbit Exhibition Organizers and Managers:

This advisory is in response to numerous questions about the current risk of spreading rabbit hemorrhagic disease (RHD) via rabbits at fairs and shows. We are posting this advisory now because of the recent increase of disease spread in southern California and the United States, and the risks created by fairs and shows. We urge rabbit owners to prevent this devastating disease by practicing good biosecurity measures and limiting comingling with other rabbits and their owners. They should also avoid moving or sharing equipment which may serve to transfer virus. Rabbit owners who have experienced recent deaths in their rabbit colony should not attend shows or exhibitions.

Since March 2020, an outbreak of RHD has been spreading in wild and domestic rabbits in the southwestern United States and is now affecting 13 U.S. states. It was detected in southern California in May 2020 and has since been killing wild and/or domestic rabbits in seven Southern California counties: Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura.

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease is caused by a highly contagious and highly fatal calicivirus of rabbits and hares. The primary ways the disease spreads is by movement of infected or exposed rabbits, direct or indirect contact with infected wild and domestic rabbits, movement of rabbit carcasses by scavengers or predators, contamination of hay or feed by infected wild rabbits, or contact with virus on fomites (surfaces) such as hands, shoes, clothing, or feet and fur of rodents and other animals. Clinical signs of rabbit hemorrhagic disease include; sudden death, lethargy, inappetence, seizures/spasms, blood from the nose or other body orifices, difficulty breathing, and vocalization. For more information, please visit https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/Animal_Health/RHD.html

To support our disease containment efforts, the California State Veterinarian is recommending that all rabbit exhibitions practice good biosecurity and health screening of all participating rabbits. The cooperation of rabbit owners is critical in controlling this disease; when exposed rabbits are not moved and comingled, disease is prevented. *An exhibition is an assembly of rabbits brought to the assembly location for purposes that include public display for any duration. Exhibitions include, but are not limited to: sales, auctions, shows, swap meets, pet marts, fair exhibits, pet stores, and petting zoos. Public zoos are not included in this definition.*

Sincerely,

Dr. Annette Jones
State Veterinarian





Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Risk Management: Advice for Rabbit Show Organizers

Biosecurity practices are always a good idea at shows, not just for rabbit hemorrhagic disease (RHD), but also to reduce the spread of more common contagious conditions such as snuffles (Pasteurella), mites, etc. The highest risk areas for RHD are those with infected feral, domestic or wild rabbits. We all have different levels of risk we are willing to accept; the most conservative participants will not take animals away from home or allow them to contact other animals. The following guidance is intended for those hosting shows.

Preventing Disease from Entering A Rabbit Show

- Managers must evaluate the disease risks and decide what control measures they should establish and enforce to prevent RHD entering and spreading during shows. Veterinarians should be consulted to help with these decisions.
- Show managers can decide to add additional requirements for exhibitors and rabbits before and during an event (e.g. restrictions based on home location of rabbits, RHDV2 vaccination, Certificate of Veterinary Inspection, or veterinary inspection on arrival).
- Keep up to date on current [ARBA](#) and California state [guidelines](#) for showing.
- Effective sanitation of equipment prior to holding a show requires two steps: cleaning and disinfection (See USDA C&D guidance, link [here](#).)

Cleaning

- Remove all organic debris from items to be disinfected (e.g. cages, feeding equipment, waterers, footwear, etc.). Items made of wood are best discarded or burned after use.
- Wash items thoroughly with soap and water; rinse well and let dry.
- Allow prolonged exposure to sunlight when possible.

Disinfection

- Saturate equipment by submersion or spray with 10% household bleach (sodium hypochlorite), 1% Virkon ®-S (DuPont), or accelerated hydrogen peroxide (Rescue®)
- Check that you're using a disinfectant that will inactivate RHD virus on the specific surfaces that need cleaning (e.g. metal, cloth, etc.)
- Allow the disinfectant to sit on the surface for 10 minutes, then rinse and let dry before allowing animal contact.



Preventing Spread at the Event

- Clean show surfaces between animals. Show surfaces need to be made of material that can be easily disinfected. Carpet, fabric, and wood are much more difficult to disinfect than wire or smooth metal surfaces.
- Discourage participants from handling other people's rabbits. Do not share feed, water, or treats with other exhibitors.
- Feed, clean and water animals in a manner to minimize contact between staff, rabbits, and rabbit owners. We recommend each owner take care of their own rabbits; if not possible, set up waterers and feeders so they can be checked without handling cages.
- Obtain hay from areas unaffected by the RHD-outbreak and securely store to prevent contact with wild rabbits.
- Keep feed covered or in a container with a lid while at shows.

- Provide handwashing stations with soap and water or bathrooms near the show area to allow for frequent washing (hand sanitizer has not been proven to deactivate this virus).
 - All people touching or handling rabbits should wash their hands before, after, and between rabbits.
 - Show staff, clerks, and judges should minimize handling rabbits from different rabbitry households. They should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water between touching rabbits belonging to different owners. When possible, they should wear short sleeves and avoid picking up or holding rabbits to avoid contamination of their clothing. Consider “hands-off” judging during the outbreak.
- Implement excellent vector control. Flies, rats, and birds are examples of animals that can move viruses around on their feet and body. Netting and fly traps may help.
- Reduce the public's contact with rabbits. Do not allow non-showing spectators into the rabbit areas. Fence off the show area and post signs to help communicate the need for increased biosecurity.
- Keep show rabbits in cages off the ground and do not allow nose-to-nose contact between rabbits in their cages or on the show table.
- Do not allow sharing of grooming stations, tools or show carpets; designate one per animal or rabbitry.

Controls after the show

- Clean and disinfect the show area immediately after the event.
- Allow a minimum of 18 days between different shows* hosted at the same venue.
- Encourage anonymous reporting of illness to your show office for 3 weeks after the show. Maintain communication with all attendees (list of e-mail addresses or cell phone numbers).



**We recommend keeping show events separate for 18 days, as individual shows will contain different animals from the original show, traveling from different regions with different exposure levels. Separating shows can prevent cross-contamination from animals or equipment, as well as provide adequate time for cleaning and disinfection. In this document, a “show” is an event that is hosted by a different organization with different exhibitors. (For example: A two-day rabbit show for the same animals may be acceptable but hosting a one-day “Open” show immediately followed by a county fair should be discouraged.)*

Before taking rabbits to shows in other states, check with the destination state for their rabbit entry-requirements, and check if your rabbits will be able to return from the show to California. Travel to RHD-affected states and contact with rabbits of unknown origin increases the risk of spreading RHD to domestic and wild rabbits in disease-free areas, even within a state with positive RHD-cases.

For further questions about preventing RHD spread at rabbit shows, please contact ahbfeedback@cdfa.ca.gov.

To report dead domestic rabbits, contact your local CDFA Animal Health Branch:

Animal Health and Food Safety Services Animal Health Branch

Headquarters - (916) 900-5002
 Redding District - (530) 225-2140
 Modesto District - (209) 491-9350
 Tulare District - (559) 685-3500
 Ontario District - (909) 947-4462

USDA-APHIS-VS - (916) 854-3950 or (877) 741-3690

For more information about RHD and biosecurity, visit:
https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/Animal_Health/RHD.html