



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