

ARBA Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Policy

August 14, 2020

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD) is a highly contagious disease caused by a calicivirus. Previous to 2020 it was assumed that the virus only affected rabbits of the *Oryctolagus cuniculus* species. This includes wild and domestic European rabbits, which our domesticated rabbits are descended from. However, a new variant of the virus is now able to infect North American native rabbits or hares, such as our cottontails, snowshoe hares, or jackrabbits. Based on ongoing outbreaks within the USA the ARBA has the following recommendations. This policy will be constantly monitored and can be modified as needed per USDA guidelines and recommendations.

- Any ARBA sanction held by a club within 250 miles of an active RHD outbreak will be cancelled, and the club provided the opportunity to reschedule the date / location for a future ARBA sanctioned show. Clubs forced to reschedule shows due to enforcement of the ARBA RHD policy will be provided every opportunity to reschedule their sanctioned show without adhering to the 30-days deadline.
- Exhibitors, judges, registrars, transporters, and vendors residing in or traveling by motor vehicle through an area of the country that is part of an active RHD outbreak are discouraged from attending ARBA sanctioned shows in other areas or having contact with other rabbit breeders for 60 days of the last RHD confirmed positive case. Clubs are encouraged to acknowledge the potential need to cancel contracts due to RHD concerns when soliciting contractors to officiate or vend at ARBA sanctioned shows. While this 60-day period of time may have lapsed, this does not in any way indicate that the area is free of RHD and clubs and members should exercise all necessary precautions and bio-security measures prior to hosting or traveling to a show.
- ARBA sanctioned cavy-only specialty shows may be held provided the club's show rules contain a specific prohibition against rabbits being on the premises of the show site during the sanctioned show. The club must also provide the following awareness in their official show catalog: "Attendees must be aware that although RHD does not infect cavies, the virus may be transmitted even without direct contact with rabbits. Many cavy breeders also raise rabbits; therefore, robust bio-security measures must be taken in order to reduce the risk of transmission of this deadly virus." Judges residing in or traveling by motor vehicle through states with active RHD outbreaks are discouraged from officiating, although the ARBA recognizes the contractual agreements are made with the club hosting the show.
- Clubs are strongly encouraged to disinfect equipment prior to set up for their show. The RHD calicivirus is inactivated by sodium hypochlorite, household bleach. To prepare add one-half cup of sodium hypochlorite to one gallon of water. Alternatively, Virkon S is effective when prepared as a 1% solution. It is recommended that organic debris such as feces, fur, and urine be completely removed from show equipment. Once cleaning of show equipment has been performed it is recommended to let the equipment dry in the sun. Clubs are encouraged to not use equipment that is maintained in or traveling through an

area of the country with an active RHD outbreak. It is recommended that reasonable efforts are made to have disinfectant spray accessible during shows.

- When accepting pre-entries for a show, should an exhibitor's address be within 150 miles of a confirmed RHD outbreak the show secretary may contact the ARBA office to confirm the status of the 150 mile requirement.
- Show personnel, judges, and registrars are encouraged to use reasonable precautions including the use of hand sanitizer and disinfectant spray when working at a show.
- Owners who have experienced RHD infections in their herd are required to report the infection to ARBA and are ineligible to participate in ARBA sanctioned shows for a period of 4 months from the last RHD-related death.

PREVIOUSLY ENACTED

- The ARBA mandates that all rabbits imported from a foreign country with a recently documented RHDV outbreak, regardless of variant or strain, in the past 60 days must be quarantined for a minimum of 30 days prior to entry in a national convention or local show.
- Rabbits imported from another country at risk or endemic for RHDV must have documentation with the date arriving into the USA clearly listed on the supporting documentation along with verification from a licensed veterinary professional stating that the rabbits imported have been quarantined for 30 days and exhibit no signs of sickness that would suggest RHDV infection or exposure. Failure to provide these documents constitute a violation of the rules stated above. Rabbits vaccinated for RHDV and/or Myxomatosis in another country must have appropriate documentation indicating the vaccine was administered with appropriate booster, if necessary.
- Any ARBA member traveling to a country where RHDV is endemic will be subject to increase scrutiny and/or restriction in attending local or national ARBA shows on a case by case basis reviewed by the ARBA Board of Directors with input from the Rabbit & Cavy Health Committee. This will be vigorously enforced should the member travel to the country during a current or emerging outbreak of the virus.

ARBA Show Rule-

SECTION 15. (D) The American Rabbit Breeders Association host club must refuse entries from exhibitors placing an entry from all locations within 150 miles which has had a confirmed outbreak of RCV/RHD/VHD within the past 60 days of the entry deadline.