

IMPORTANT RABBIT HEALTH NOTICE: **RABBIT VIRAL HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE IN US**

Provided by the Rabbit Industry Council, 3789 Oro Bangor Hwy, Oroville, CA (530)534-7390

Rabbit Viral Hemorrhagic Disease (RVHD, RHD, or VHD) is a foreign animal disease not seen in the United States until April 2000, when a small herd in Iowa was diagnosed positive. Since then, there have been three further outbreaks, in Utah/Illinois (8/01), Flushing, NY (12/01) and Indiana/Kentucky (6/05).

At this time (6-13-05), one herd of 200 in Indiana was affected and has been depopulated. Traces forward and back are in progress, centered in Evansville, IN and a flea market in Greenville, KY, where new animals were obtained just before the losses began.

Awareness of and education about this disease is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

There are no other verified positive or active disease locations in the USA at this time.

Careful surveillance and open communication are the keys to early detection and control of this deadly disease.

ABOUT RVHD:

This highly contagious viral disease can kill up to 100% of the domestic rabbits exposed; the incubation period is short, ranging from 24-72 hours from exposure to illness. Wild cottontail rabbits and hares are not susceptible, and this disease does not affect humans or other species.

Three forms of the disease exist once begun:

Peracute, where one or more rabbits, usually greater than 8 weeks of age, are simply found dead in their cages.

Acute, where symptoms such as lethargy and fever may be seen, with death usually within one to three days.

The **transient** form of the disease is rare in adult rabbits, common in those under about 12 weeks of age. The transiently-affected animals will become ill, displaying mild forms of the symptoms, then recover. ***These animals will shed infective virus in urine and feces for at least four weeks and may act as passive carriers for longer as well.***

Careful observation of your rabbits is essential; watch for *sudden unexpected adult deaths*, possibly with froth from the nose, either fluid or blood; watch for *multiple deaths in a short period of time* or that are *not explicable by other means*. No new animals should be allowed in without a quarantine of at least 7 days, preferably 30 days. It is highly recommended that all rabbit owners educate themselves about this disease before showing or exposing their rabbits to others, or purchasing any new animals. Pet owners should limit their rabbits' excursions. Shelters/rescues should exercise extreme care and quarantine procedures similar to those of closed breeding facilities.

If you suspect one or more deaths are due to RVHD, please contact your state veterinarian as soon as possible by calling your state agricultural and livestock department, or call **USDA Emergency Services at (301)734-8073**. The USDA/APHIS Veterinary Services site is <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ep/RCD/index.html>, or email emoc@usda.gov. Their staff will then help you evaluate the death(s), and if needed, will take samples for RVHD diagnostic procedures.

Timely, accurate information is available: on the Internet from the RIC and its partners at <http://www.showbunny.com/health> or email RIC@cncnet.com; also from the Rabbit Industry Council at (530) 534-7390 8am-5pm Pacific time, 7 days a week. Message calls will be returned as soon as possible. Urgent inquiries about possible cases should be directed to your state veterinarian. Those wishing to keep up-to-date online should join the VHDInfo group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VHDInfo/> for the latest information, or contact the RIC as above for latest references and resources.

The <http://www.showbunny.com/health> page is devoted to RVHD Information at this time.

For More Information: The VHDInfo Group, vhdinfo-subscribe@yahoogroups.com ****Recommended****; The Rabbit Industry Council (see above); American Rabbit Breeders Association, <http://www.arba.net>, phone (309) 664-7500, email ARBAPOST@aol.com; The American Branch of the World Rabbit Science Association, Dr. Steven Lukefahr, phone (361)593-3699, email s-lukefahr@tamuk.edu