

Biosecurity Recommendations for Rabbit Shows, Sales and Exhibitions

Strong biosecurity plans and practices are critical for a successful fair, sale or show. These tools protect animals from potentially fatal disease and help ensure a positive experience for exhibitors and visitors alike. Biosecurity practices do not have to be expensive and often involve supplies and protocols already in use in the barns and facilities where these events take place. As manager, you have the responsibility and opportunity to prevent the spread of disease by developing and enforcing a biosecurity plan for your event and facility.

Rabbits are susceptible to several infectious diseases, including tularemia (rabbit fever), rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), and respiratory infections caused by Pasteurella bacteria (Snuffles). These diseases are often spread through direct contact with sick rabbits. However, healthy rabbits can also be infected by being exposed to contaminated surfaces, cages and equipment, feed and water, and bedding. The following biosecurity recommendations help prevent the diseases listed above.

Before the Event

- Check the disease status of your local and surrounding areas and consider cancelling or changing to virtual judging if there has been an outbreak of disease in the past 30 days.
 - Minnesota Board of Animal Health: [News Releases \(mn.gov/bah/news_release/\)](http://mn.gov/bah/news_release/) and [Animal Bytes \(mn.gov/bah/animal-bytes/\)](http://mn.gov/bah/animal-bytes/)
 - USDA: [Map of RHDV2 outbreaks \(www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/maps/animal-health/rhd\)](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/maps/animal-health/rhd)
 - American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA): [Current RHDV Information \(arba.net/announcements/\)](http://arba.net/announcements/)
 - NOTE: ARBA policy requires any ARBA sanctioned event scheduled within 30 days and 50 miles of an active outbreak of RHDV in a domestic rabbit or 25 miles of an active outbreak in wild rabbits be cancelled. Contact ARBA for more information.
- Ask exhibitors to sign a waiver stating that there has not been RHDV2 or other signs of illness in their herd in the 90 days prior to the event.
- Clean and disinfect barns, cages/coops, and equipment according to recommended guidelines between events.
 - [Minnesota Board of Animal Health Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines for RHDV \(mn.gov/bah/media/RHDV_CandD_Guidelines.pdf\)](http://mn.gov/bah/media/RHDV_CandD_Guidelines.pdf)
- Have a staged check-in procedure in cooperation with your Official Veterinarian.
 - Rabbits examined BEFORE entering barn/facility.
 - Transfer of examined rabbits into fair/barn owned, disinfected cages/coops OUTSIDE of the barn/facility.
- Consider implementing a RHDV2 vaccination requirement for entered rabbits.

During the Event

Housing and Equipment

Minimal Suggestions:

- Discourage contact between rabbits from different households.
 - Group rabbits by exhibitor.
 - Place plastic sheeting or other impermeable material between cages/coops.
 - Do not have shared grooming stations, equipment, or tools.
- Consider providing inert bedding material such as newspaper, cat litter, or potty pads instead of straw or shavings.
- Require each exhibitor to care for their own rabbits.
- NOTE: Discourage sharing of cages. If cages are shared, they should be cleaned and disinfected between rabbits occupying the cages.

Additional Considerations:

- Require soiled bedding to be removed at least twice daily and double bagged before discarding.
- Provide multiple cleaning stations for equipment and disinfectant solution in spray bottles or wipes to exhibitors.
- All table skirting and other display materials must be plastic or other impermeable material able to be disinfected daily by barn/fair staff or exhibitors if self-provided.
- Exercise strict pest control. Flies and other insects, rodents, and birds can all spread disease and should be eliminated from the barn/facility.

Judging

- Require exhibitors to transport their own rabbits to judging area/ring instead of using a runner.
- Allow only one rabbit or rabbits from the same household in judging area at a time.
- Do not share carpet squares between rabbits from different households. Require exhibitors to bring their own dedicated carpet square to the event.
- Disinfect judging table between each rabbit. The judge should use alcohol-based hand sanitizer or wash hands between each rabbit and avoid rabbit contact with their clothes.

Exhibitors, Fair/Barn Staff and Public Visitors

- Discourage human contact with rabbits outside of their household.
- Do not allow the public to have contact with rabbits.
 - Rope off housing and judging areas to prevent access.
 - Post signs explaining biosecurity and disease risk.
- Provide hand washing stations and alcohol-based hand sanitizer throughout the event space.
- Require staff to wash hands and clean shoe bottoms when moving between animal barns/facilities.
- Encourage exhibitors to supply their own water and feed in closed containers.
- Discourage sharing of tools or equipment between exhibitors without proper cleaning and disinfection.

After the Event

- Maintain a list of exhibitors and their contact information.
- Ask for reports of rabbit illness in the 30 days following the event and notify participants if any occur.
- Consider a 14-day break between hosting events at the same location to allow for cleaning and disinfection and disease monitoring.
- Separate rabbits returning home from a show or event from any rabbits that did not leave the home and quarantine the show rabbits for at least 30 days. Quarantined animals should be cleaned and cared for AFTER cleaning and caring for all the other animals in the home.

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