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# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE ON RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE VIRUS 2 (RHDV2)

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture and the Arkansas State Veterinarian regularly monitor the spread of infectious diseases that may affect livestock, poultry, and other domesticated animals with the goal of communicating to the public any potential risks of infection to such animals. One emerging risk that the Arkansas State Veterinarian has been monitoring is the spread of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2). After review of the available information, the Arkansas State Veterinarian recommends that Arkansas Fair Manager Association members not sponsor or hold rabbit shows during any fair or exhibition in 2020 due to the threat of RHDV2.

While RHDV2 is not infectious to humans, RHDV2 is a highly contagious and almost always fatal disease affecting domestic and wild rabbits. So far in 2020, RHDV2 has been confirmed in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Texas. Commonly the only indication of this disease is sudden death (blood-stained noses sometimes present). Other signs may be fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, nervous signs, and difficulty breathing. The incubation period from exposure to signs of the disease can range from one to five days. Disease spread is caused by direct contact with infected rabbits, meat or fur. The virus can be spread through contact with infected urine or feces, cages and bedding, feeders, equipment, etc. People also serve to spread the virus when handling or petting an infected rabbit or contact with infected materials and then touching a susceptible rabbit. Hiking of rabbit owners in infected areas has been associated with disease incidence in pet rabbits. The virus can survive on an object for over 3 MONTHS in a dry area (covered) at room temperatures. Vaccine is not currently available in Arkansas, due to restrictions on usage in states not currently experiencing outbreaks.

Commingling live rabbits (shows and fairs) poses a significant risk of spread and can have a considerable impact on rabbit populations in Arkansas. It is strongly recommended to cancel or postpone any public rabbit events for the foreseeable future. The following links provide addition information about RHDV2 and offer some guidance on best practices.

**Precautions and References:**

[https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200614\\_4CP-Rabbit-Hemorrhagic-Disease-Brochure.pdf](https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200614_4CP-Rabbit-Hemorrhagic-Disease-Brochure.pdf)

[https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/29b\\_RHD2\\_USDA.pdf](https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/29b_RHD2_USDA.pdf)

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