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Notice of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease in Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is notifying the public that a positive case of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease has been identified in Arkansas.

The United State Department of Agriculture Veterinary Services has confirmed that a domestic rabbit in northeast Arkansas was tested for rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV-2) with a positive test result. Additional histopathology test results are still pending.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV-2) is highly contagious and affects both domestic and wild rabbits but does not infect humans or other animals, including dogs and cats. Many times, the only signs of the disease are a rabbit's sudden death and perhaps bloodstained noses. Other signs include lethargy, decreased appetite, or labored breathing.

Rabbits can become infected through direct contact or exposure to an infected rabbit's urine, feces, and blood. The virus can survive for months in the environment. People can spread the virus by carrying it on their shoes or clothing, contaminated feed/hay, using unclean cages and water bowls, or petting and carrying infected rabbits.

Biosecurity is the best defense against RHDV-2 infection of rabbits. Avoid contact with other rabbits, their owners, kids for playdays, vehicles, equipment, and feed supplies. Change shoes before entering any of your rabbit housing; dedicate a pair of easily cleaned shoes to the rabbit shed and do not wear them outside the enclosure. Fence animals away from access to rabbitries, especially feed trays and water sources. All bedding should be sacked for disposal and secured in storage. Burning used rabbit litter may be hazardous.

More information on Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease is available at

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

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