

## Biosecurity for Rabbit Owners

Rabbit owners and commercial operations should work with their veterinarian or state animal health official to identify their biosecurity risk factors. Customized site-specific biosecurity plans should identify key risk factors, establish best practices and make considerations for vaccination or other tools for disease mitigation and control. Plans may vary based on geographic location, OIE status, confirmation of infection in wildlife or access to vaccine. Key areas for consideration include:

### Human Best Practices

- Have indoor and outdoor footwear; don't wear outdoor shoes indoors and vice versa.
- Wash hands before and after handling or caring for rabbits and between groups.
- Don't allow visitors who also have rabbits.
- Don't handle others' rabbits.
- Handle sick rabbits last.
- Follow disposal guidance for dead rabbits. (Find it at [www.agriculture.ks.gov/RHDV2](http://www.agriculture.ks.gov/RHDV2))

### “Line of Separation” and “Perimeter Buffer Area”

- Commercial operations may apply these concepts during periods of heightened risk, especially in areas where Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV2) has affected wild rabbits.

### Housing

- Keep rabbits inside if possible on an impermeable surface.
- If rabbits are housed outdoors, double fence to avoid direct contact with wildlife.
- Prevent direct or indirect contact with wild rabbits.
- House rabbits in hutches or cages off the ground.
- Do not use forage, tree branches or grass for bedding from areas with infected wildlife.

### Isolation

- Isolate new rabbits or rabbits returning from a show. (See KDA's Guidance for Shows and Fairs.)
- Keep rabbits in separate area for 30 days before allowing contact with your colony.
- If traveling out of state, be aware of animal health and Certificate of Veterinary Inspection requirements for the state of destination.

### **Clean and Disinfect Equipment**

- Refer to USDA's guidance document: [USDA C&D guidance](#)
- Cleaning
  - Remove all visible organic debris from items to be disinfected (cages, feeding equipment, waterers, etc.). Items made of wood are best discarded or burned.
  - Wash items thoroughly with soap and water; rinse well and let dry.
- Disinfection
  - Saturate by submersion or spray with 10% household bleach (sodium hypochlorite) OR 1% Virkon-S (by DuPont) or accelerated hydrogen peroxide products (Rescue, Accel, Virox 5).
  - Allow 10 minutes of contact, then rinse and let dry before allowing animal contact.

### **Control disease vectors**

- Prevent exposure to flies, rats, cats, dogs, birds, etc. that can move the virus around on their feet or body.
- Fence out scavengers and wildlife (including wild rabbits).

### **Feeding**

- Do not put rabbits down on the ground to eat grass, etc.
- Do not collect outdoor forage and browse to feed rabbits; stay with pelleted feed in areas where wild rabbits are infected. Treats can include raw vegetables from grocery stores.
- Source hay from unaffected areas.

### **Rabbit Health**

- Monitor your rabbits closely: watch for signs of illness such as going off feed, looking limp/depressed, or behaving differently in any way.
- Call your vet ASAP if you note signs of illness in your rabbits.
- Consider vaccination for RHDV2 where available (see vaccine guidance).

**Report all unusual mass morbidity (sickness) and/or mortality (death) events to the KDA Division of Animal Health at 785-564-6601.**

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