



Mississippi Board of Animal Health

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Biosecurity for Rabbit Owners

Biosecurity is a term used to describe the measures you can take to prevent disease from coming into your rabbitry, whether you raise rabbits for fun or profit. As you consider these measures, it is important to know several things about the virus that causes the disease “Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease”, a very deadly disease.

1. It is a very hardy virus and can exist in the environment for an extended period.
2. The primary way that a rabbit gets infected is by mouth.
3. Rabbits that have been sick and recovered can shed virus for several weeks.
4. This disease is now found in wild rabbits, not just domestic rabbits.

Important Measures to Protect Your Rabbits from Disease:

1. **Maintain a Closed Rabbitry.**
 - a. Do not bring in outside rabbits if at all possible.
 - b. If it is necessary to bring in outside rabbits, they should be quarantined in a separate building for 30 days. Make sure that quarantined rabbits are fed/watered/examined last. Do not go from quarantined rabbits to your non-quarantined rabbits.
2. **Visitors**
 - a. Do not allow visitors to have contact/handle your rabbits, ESPECIALLY people that own rabbits or may have come in contact with wild rabbits such as hunting. As stated previously, this virus is very hardy and can last on clothes, shoes etc. for weeks during the right time of year.
 - b. If you must have a visitor have contact with your rabbits, require them to wear clean coveralls, shoe covers and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
 - c. Do not visit other rabbitries or handle other people’s rabbits.
 - i. If you do, then wash your hands and change clothes and shoes before handling your rabbits
 - ii. Use separate footwear for outside and inside the rabbitry, or use a disinfectant footbath, to avoid tracking contamination on your shoes
 - d. If you are selling rabbits, take them out to the customer, don’t allow the customer to come in contact with your rabbits.
3. **Prevent exposure to wild rabbits.**
 - a. Maintain proper fencing so wild rabbits cannot enter your yard, rabbit housing, or feed storage area
 - b. Watch that dogs, cats, birds and scavengers do not bring rabbit carcasses onto your property.
 - c. Do not feed plants or forage gathered from outside (including your garden to your rabbit unless it is washed first.
 - d. Do not use materials gathered from outside for bedding or cage base
4. **Cleaning and disinfection**
 - a. caging, enclosures, harnesses, and other equipment between different rabbits can be disinfected with 10% bleach water, 1% Virkon-S, or other product recommended by your veterinarian
 - b. Always wash your hands before and after handling your rabbit