

RHD in the US Coalition
A Network Dedicated To Keeping The US RHD Free

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April 9, 2002

Rabbit Club Name
Secretary's Name
Address
City State Zip

Dear Secretary,

I am sending you this letter and the enclosed educational materials due to my concern for the lack of educational material available to people with rabbits regarding RHD, also known as RCD and VHD, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease.

I am also concerned with the lack of action on the part of leaders within the rabbit breeders community. For instance;

- Directors have been given information and told not to share it with others by ARBA leaders. This may have been due to a fear of causing panic initially. At this time, it may be to cover up some of the truth.
- After eighteen years of watching RHD spread across the globe, ARBA is just now asking for a ban on rabbits and rabbit products from infected countries. Do you remember when Foot and Mouth broke out in England? Quickly the U.S. banned imports. Travelers were warned. Cats birds and dogs are given protection from infectious diseases at our borders as well. It wasn't until October of 2001 that Dr. Hayhow wrote a letter to Dr. Alphonso Torres, former head of Veterinary Services of the USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS, asking for the same protection. He has not made the act of writing the letter widely known. Nothing has come of that letter. Why aren't rabbits and our interests being protected in the same manner that other pet owners, dogs, cats, birds, cattle and cattlemen are?
- After outbreaks of RHD in four states, Utah, Indiana, Iowa and New York, no shows were cancelled in those states after outbreaks. This is not in keeping with the guidelines ARBA once set. I cannot say that without a doubt stopping shows is appropriate. I do believe that we should be given more information regarding the way these decisions are being made so that we can make educated decisions to protect our rabbits ourselves.
- I frequently get letters and emails from people who do not know anything about RHD. Education is the only precaution available. We must help people prevent the spread of this disease and that cannot happen if they do not know about it.
- There is a lot of evidence that Caliciviruses, the group of viruses that RHD is a part of are widespread and may be having an effect on rabbit health. No testing is being done to

prove or disprove this or to ascertain what health issues are being created. It may also be true that exposure to Caliciviruses have created an immunity to RHD in some U.S. rabbits.

Because of these concerns I have joined an organization that is working to rectify some of these problems. The RHD in the US Coalition is comprised of breeders, people with pet rabbits and rabbit fosterer. We are all working together to stop the threat of RHD. Our work includes the following;

- Educate as many people involved with rabbits as possible in regards to prevention measures
- Create a means by which people can have their rabbits tested for Caliciviruses, this to see if they are widespread, creating an immunity to RHD, causing health problems and stop the USDA from killing healthy rabbits who are near an outbreak but immune because they already fought of a calicivirus infection naturally.
- Write letters to legislators to stop RHD from being imported and to see that, if necessary, a vaccine is made available to protect U.S. rabbits as soon as possible.

I am enclosing material to help educational efforts. I would really appreciate it if you could make copies and distribute the documents to your club members as you feel appropriate.

Over and over again we are told not to panic. I believe that we are intelligent enough to deal with the threat of RHD in a rational manner. We may panic at first, but that feeling dissolves and the desire to do something replaces it. We can end this threat if we work together.

Please feel free to call us at any time. We have additional educational materials that we could send. You may also access our material and stay updated regarding outbreaks and developments by visiting our website at www.vhdcoalition.org. If your club is interested, we can place you on our offline alert system. This would insure that you are informed of new outbreaks and developments.

Highest Regards,

Your Name
? State Breeders Liaison
RHD in the US Coalition