

The RHD in the U.S. Coalition
When RHD Came To Illinois
As Told By A Breeder Who Experienced An Outbreak

I have been raising New Zealand white, and Standard Chinchilla for about 30 years. I use to go to shows about every weekend if I could. Then one day my nephew called and asked if I could find 100 Flemish Giants for shipment, well, I did find them and they were shipped to Korea . The word got out that I shipped rabbits. I started to work for an export company and still do. I felt so good to be making money with my hobby..

This summer a woman from Chicago Illinois called and ordered some white rex The first shipment was sent off, and they ordered more rabbits. I also got an other order from China for 200. I called the Utah breeder who is my supplier and told him I would need rabbits all summer. He said he could breed for me and asked if I would send money in good faith, which I did, one half..

I picked up rabbits in PA the first of June. I also picked up rabbits in IN, and MN. The rabbits were beautiful stock. I called Utah and asked about more rabbits the middle of June, and was told the babies were not ready, so I called again in July and was told the babies were dieing from the heat. I watch the weather channel and it seemed Utah was having a hot summer . So I did not get to upset, things do happen when raising rabbits. In August, I called again and was told he could not fill the order that he promise, but call again in two weeks. I called and asked what he could send. He promised around 70. .

I sent a driver to Utah to pick up the rabbits. They came straight from Utah, no stops, but for gas and food. The trailer was enclosed and aluminum, brand new. There were two dead on the trailer when it arrived, but it had been two days traveling. I didn't get upset, it was a long trip. The next day a man from China flew in to inspect the rabbits and loved them, and ordered colored rex. This man said he was a small breeder of only 1000 rabbits. He was smiling the whole time. I felt so proud of the rabbits and the job that I did in the love and care of each rabbit. I called some breeders and told them they should be proud of their rabbits..

August 18, my birthday, I worked all day worming, weighting, and tattooing rabbits, I did not do the Utah rabbits as I thought they should rest because they looked tired. That night the call came from Illinois Vet with the bad word..

This was a Saturday, Monday, the USDA and the Illinois Vet were at my house. That is the morning that the Utah rabbits started to die. It took 5 days..

The Illinois vet and myself took blood from the Utah rabbits and then it was sent to Plum Island. The tests were positive. .

For the next 2 1/2 weeks I got to watch them die. .



I was told I had to get the dead rabbits in plastic container in my USDA inspected barn. I had my other rabbits 150 yards away. My USDA barn was inspected before I received any rabbits, which is required according to exporting rules when exporting to China. No other animal, or humans can go in..

The Utah rabbits died first, this was a slow death, as they would waste away. The blood would come out any opening. The eyes, the nose, rectum, and even the toenails. These rabbits did not scream. Just wasted away. It went around the barn, the closest rabbits to the last dead rabbits would die.

This went on for one week, and then I started to fight back. I bleached everything twice a day. It seemed to help. But you have to remember I could not remove the dead rabbits and the droppings from the barn. I brought plastic containers everyday, to put the dead rabbits in and the also the droppings. I bleached by hands before and after feeding, I wore coveralls, hats and boots. My rabbits were still O.K...



The second week, in August, the flies showed up. I sprayed, I was still losing rabbits, at least five in the morning and five at night. One morning I lost 36 rabbits. Blow flies started to come. One morning I was feeding my rabbits, when I saw a blow fly on a Standard Chinchilla. It was the first rabbit in my other barn to go..

After 2 1/2 weeks the smell was so bad I could not stand it any longer, that is when I asked my husband to help me move the container outside. He walked in and asked if something shouldn't be done for health reasons. He called the USDA

and told them we were burying the rabbits. We hired a backhoe and dug a hole big enough so that we could bury the rabbits and cover it up..

The USDA finally showed up to have me sign a paper to put down the rabbits. They told me they could put down the rabbits without me signing because I had no rights. There is no law for rabbits or this disease in the US. Where is our Association ? They did pay for the live rabbits at domestic prices, but not the dead rabbits. I had 100 live rabbits left at the time. They had stopped dieing by that time. My husband and myself held the rabbits as they gave the heart stick. They did die easy. Only one of the officials who came, there were two, was interested in the disease...



There are several things that I learned. You have no friends when you have this disease. I had a friend hang up on me on the phone when I called. I was told to stay away..