

## **IF WHAT AND WHEN TO TREAT**

By Pat Mareska/Bunny Brigade

It is wrong for anyone to deliberately bring sick animals or ones infested with various parasites to shows. It is possible for a rabbit who exhibited no symptoms at home, to turn up snuffling after a long trip to a show. Sometimes, if nasal discharge is clear, it is possible the animal is just overheated and stressed. In the hot, dusty desert climate, an occasional rabbit or rabbits may sneeze (I sneeze a lot and, no, I am not allergic to the rabbits!). If you see a thick white exudate from anywhere on the rabbit, that is pasteurized. The only "cure" is to destroy the animal quickly and to carefully observe the rest of your herd for any sign of this highly contagious and 100% NON-curable condition.

If someone is consistently bringing sick animals to shows, that person needs to be educated (kindly and in a helpful manner) by other breeders. Maybe this person really isn't aware of the seriousness of what they are doing and the potential harm their careless actions may cause. Especially now, when everyone is so aware of the danger of VHD epidemic in rabbits. We all need to be alert for any signs of illness and take immediate action.

Regarding if and when to treat is a very individual matter. Pet owners have a totally different perspective than the professional rabbit breeder. In my case, I was a pet owner for 15 years before a breeder at county fair recruited me to join ARBA. It was another 2-1/2 years before I got my first pedigreed rabbit and began attending shows.

In my pet owning and early ARBA years, I was ready to treat anything. Fortunately, our first rabbit (who lived seven years) was very healthy and never needed treatment. The best conditioned rabbits I ever owned were the pets who got to run loose in the yard just about every day.

Currently, as an established breeder, there is very little that I will treat. Rabbit health is a complex subject. Treatment is quite controversial from the extreme of those who medicate everything to those who treat nothing. As I have had some experience at both ends of the spectrum, I will plan to share some of my experience and observations in the future editions of our newsletter (if space permits) as it appears there is some interest in the topic. Some of my experiences with cancer in rabbits has been of interest to my co-workers in the hospital where I am employed. I attended the Veterinary Conference on Pasturella in Madison several years ago and came away with some firm convictions thanks to the lectures and demonstrations presented.