

# Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV)

## What is Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease?

RHDV is a highly contagious and fatal disease affecting rabbits. Typical rabbit hemorrhagic disease viruses affect domestic rabbits. The current form can affect wild rabbits including hares, jackrabbits, and cottontails. RHDV has been recently reported in New Mexico, Washington, Arizona, Texas, Colorado, California, Nevada, and Utah.

## Does RHDV affect other species?

RHDV only affects rabbits. RHDV does not affect people.

## How does RHDV Spread?

The virus is present in urine and feces of infected rabbits and is spread between rabbits by inhalation and ingestion. RHDV can be spread in contaminated bedding, food, or forage. RHDV is also spread from infected carcasses, flies, predators, scavengers, vehicle tires, or by rabbit caretakers' hands, clothing, footwear, and contaminated equipment. It is important to remember that the virus can live in the environment for extended periods.

## How does RHDV affect rabbits?

RHDV affects pet rabbits as well as wild rabbits. Sudden death is typically the first sign of the disease. Blood staining around the nose and mouth may be noted. Fever, reluctance to eat, difficulty breathing, and incoordination are also signs of RHDV. Young rabbits, less than 4-8 weeks of age, may become infected and not show any clinical signs of the disease.

## How should I protect my rabbits or reduce the risk of RHDV?

There is no effective treatment for RHDV. Strict biosecurity is the most important aspect of prevention. Quarantine and carefully monitor all new rabbits for a minimum of 10 days prior to moving them into your rabbit barn. After returning from a rabbit show, separate the rabbits that attended from the rest of your rabbits. Use dedicated footwear, clothing, and equipment in your barn and do not use it outside of your barn. Clean and disinfect all equipment regularly and do not share it between rabbits. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling rabbits. Do not allow rabbits to have outside access or provide them with outdoor forage or plants. Control pests (flies, mice, rats, etc.). If you have contact with rabbits outside of your herd, wash your hands and change your clothes prior to handling your rabbits.

## What should I do if I suspect that one of my rabbits has RHDV?

If you suspect your rabbits are sick with RHDV or were exposed to it, immediately call the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship at (515) 281-5305 or the USDA at (515) 284-4140.

For more information see the USDA Emerging Risk Notice:

[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/downloads/Rabbit-Hemorrhagic-Disease\\_062018.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/Rabbit-Hemorrhagic-Disease_062018.pdf)

Or The Center for Food Security & Public Health Fact Sheet:

[http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabbit\\_hemorrhagic\\_disease.pdf](http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabbit_hemorrhagic_disease.pdf)



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