



MISSOURI
dept. of
Agriculture

RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE VIRUS 2 (RHDV₂)

for rabbit owners

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 (RHDV₂) is a highly contagious and potentially fatal disease that affects both domestic and wild rabbits of all ages. This is a foreign animal disease (FAD) as recognized by the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) and is of high concern in the United States. RHDV₂ has been confirmed in several states.

Often the only clinical sign of the disease is sudden death, possibly with blood stained noses caused by internal bleeding. Other signs include fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, neurologic signs and difficulty breathing. The incubation period for the disease is one to five days.

The virus is spread via direct contact with infected rabbits, as well as their meat or fur. The virus can also be spread indirectly through contact with an infected rabbit's excretions, cages, bedding, feeders, equipment, etc. People can also serve as a fomite in the spread of the virus when handling an infected rabbit or their materials mentioned previously and then carrying the virus to a naïve rabbit. The virus can survive on an object for up to 105 days in dry, room temperature.

RHDV₂ is not infectious to people or other domestic animals.

Guidelines for Rabbit Owners

Entry Control Measures

- **Certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs):** CVIs will be required for all out of state rabbits. An accredited veterinarian must examine rabbits prior to entry into Missouri. This may not prevent rabbits who could be incubating RHVD2 from developing clinical signs of disease, so all newly acquired rabbits should be isolated and monitored closely.



REPORT SUSPICIOUS CASES

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease is a reportable disease. If suspected, this disease should be immediately reported to the Missouri State Veterinarian's office at (573) 751-3377, or the USDA Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) at (573) 658-9850.

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- **Exam of all incoming rabbits:** Have all newly acquired rabbits examined by a licensed veterinarian immediately upon acquisition. Know the health status of the rabbitry from which you purchase rabbits.
- **Isolation and quarantine:** Isolate all new additions for a minimum of 10 days, or as directed by your veterinarian. Isolate any rabbits showing signs of illness and call your veterinarian immediately.

Premises Control Measures

- **General Biosecurity Measures**

- Be aware of visitors from other states or countries with rabbit disease and take appropriate precautions. Restrict visitors to your rabbitry and limit the handling of the animals by visitors.
- Be aware of the rabbit disease status of the state or country of origin of any equipment or supplies that you are purchasing.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with other people's rabbits. If you must have contact with other people's animals, wash your hands or shower and change your clothes prior to handling your rabbits.
- After visiting a show, fair, or meeting where rabbits were commingled, shower and change clothes before handling your rabbits.
- Minimize exposure to wild rabbits and hares by keeping your rabbits in hutches or cages that are elevated off the ground and preferably indoors.
- Control wild rabbits, dogs, coyotes, insects, birds, rodents, and other animals, which may carry disease to your facility.
- Maintain separate footwear for use in the rabbitry. Do not enter the rabbitry with footwear worn outdoors.
- Practice proper hygiene when handling rabbits. Wash hands before and after handling each rabbit.

- **Cleaning and disinfection:** Cleaning and disinfection is a very important disease control measure. First, clean surfaces well to remove organic material. Second, apply an effective disinfectant. Third, allow 10 minutes of contact time (or as labeled) prior to rinsing and drying. Clean and disinfect feeders, water receptacles and other equipment daily if possible. A list of recommended disinfectants is as follows:

- Sodium hypochlorite (1:10 dilution household bleach)
- 1% Virkon-S
- Sodium hydroxide (1%)
- Beta-propiolactone.

- **Monitoring for health:** Rabbits should be regularly observed for clinical signs of RHVD2. If clinical signs are suspected, the rabbit should be isolated and reported to the Missouri State Veterinarian's office.



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Rabbit owners who have questions about this disease should contact their veterinarian.

More information on RHDV2 can be found at:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf.

