

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus – type 2

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

✓ **WHAT CAUSES RHDV2?**

- RHDV2 is caused by a **highly contagious** virus of the family Caliciviridae that affects both wild and domestic rabbits
- RHDV2 has been spreading across the United States since 2020 – as of August 2022 the virus has been detected in Wisconsin and neighboring states of Iowa and Minnesota

✓ **HOW IS RHDV2 SPREAD?**

- Direct contact with an infected rabbit. Indirectly via:
 - Exposure to blood, feces, urine, or saliva of an infected animal (ingestion or inhalation)
 - Transfer on objects such as bedding, clothing, shoes
 - Insects
- The virus is very hardy – stable for weeks in dry environments, can survive freeze-thaw cycles
- Infected rabbits that survive may shed the virus for up to 4 months

✓ **WHAT ARE THE COMMON SIGNS OF RHDV2?**

- RHDV2 is a **highly fatal** disease, often manifesting only as sudden death. Other signs may include:
 - Fever, decreased energy, decreased appetite
 - Neurologic signs – seizures, unsteady gait, paralysis
 - Bloody discharge from nose, mouth
 - Difficulty breathing
- Clinical signs or death are often seen within 1-3 days after exposure / infection

✓ **HOW IS RHDV2 DIAGNOSED?**

- Typically, RHDV2 is first identified by clinical signs – it can only be definitively diagnosed by specific laboratory testing

✓ **IS THERE ANY TREATMENT FOR RHDV2?**

- Besides supportive care, there is no definitive treatment for RHDV2.

✓ **CAN HUMANS, DOGS, OR CATS BECOME INFECTED WITH RHDV2?**

- No. RHDV2 is not transmissible to people, dogs, or cats. It is a rabbit-specific disease.

✓ **IS THERE A VACCINE FOR RHDV2?**

- Yes, there is currently one vaccine approved for use in the US, under Emergency Use Authorization
 - Though newly available, the vaccine was found to be safe and effective in an experimental population of rabbits
- The vaccine is a series of 2 injections, spaced 21 days apart, then boosted annually
- It is highly recommended that new rabbit owners follow up with their primary veterinarian regarding vaccination for RHDV2
- Side effects are minimal and may include mild, temporary swelling at the injection site

✓ **HOW CAN I PROTECT MY PET RABBIT FROM RHDV2?**

- Get your rabbit vaccinated as soon as possible
- Do not allow your rabbit to roam around on the ground outside – keep them away from areas that could be exposed to wild rabbits
- Wash hands before and after handling rabbits
- Keep newly introduced rabbits quarantined for 30 days prior to introducing to other rabbits

✓ **WHAT IF I SEE SICK WILD RABBITS IN MY YARD?**

- If you find a sick or injured wild rabbit, please contact your closest licensed wildlife rehabilitator. If you are in Milwaukee, Racine, or Ozaukee Counties, that would be the WHS Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at 414-431-6204. If you are outside of those counties, please see the state directory of all licensed wildlife rehabilitators on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website or search the Animal Help Now website to find your closest resource.
- If you suspect 3 or more rabbits in your yard may be infected and/or have died of RHDV2, you are to contact the DNR directly at 607-267-0866 or DNRWildlifeSwitchboard@wisconsin.gov.

✓ **WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT RHDV2?**

- <https://rabbit.org/rhdv/>
- <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-health/rabbit-hemorrhagic-disease>
- https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/RabbitHemorrhagicDisease.aspx

RESOURCES

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

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-health/rabbit-hemorrhagic-disease>

<https://medgenelabs.com/rhdv2/>