



RABBITS & RHDV2

- WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW -

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD) is a highly contagious and deadly disease caused by a calicivirus that affects both wild and domestic rabbits. It's not contagious to people or other animals. Rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus 2 (RHDV2) causes deaths in wild rabbits and hares native to North America and has spread throughout the United States, Mexico, and parts of Canada.

The virus is shed in urine, feces, and secretions from eyes, nose, and mouth, and remains present in fur and internal organs and tissues. The virus infects rabbits through the mucous membranes of their eyes, noses, and mouths. Sick rabbits and insects typically transmit the virus. While RHD only affects rabbits, the disease can be transmitted by people or animals through contact with contaminated objects, animals, insects, or feces. **Even if your rabbit is kept inside, they are still at risk of becoming infected with RHD.**

The virus causes death within 3-5 days of exposure, often with no symptoms. A sudden rabbit death is suspicious and should be reported to your veterinarian as a possible RHD case. Report sightings of sick and/or dead wild rabbits to your state wildlife officials; **do not touch them.**

PROTECTING YOUR RABBIT FROM RHD

- ▶ Keep your rabbit indoors with no outdoor playtime and no playtime with other rabbits from outside your home.
- ▶ Wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling rabbits.
- ▶ After contact with other rabbits, change your clothes and wash them.
- ▶ Leave shoes outside your home.
- ▶ Disinfect objects that may be contaminated. Visit rabbit.org/rhdv for a list of disinfectants that effectively kill the virus that causes RHD.
- ▶ Keep mosquitos and flies out of your home with window and door screens.
- ▶ Know your sources of hay, feed, and greens, and avoid if located in areas where RHD is spreading among wild rabbits who may be carrying the virus.
- ▶ Quarantine any new rabbit for at least 14 days.
- ▶ Multi-pet households should take additional precautions to protect their rabbit, as the virus can be spread to a healthy, indoor-only rabbit by cats and dogs who go outside. **(see reverse)**
- ▶ Learn how to trim your rabbit's nails and groom them at home, not taking them to higher-risk locations like a rescue or vet's office.
- ▶ Use a monthly flea treatment for rabbits, cats, and dogs. Advantage II and Revolution are safe to use on rabbits. Never use Frontline. Visit rabbit.org/faq-grooming to learn more.



GETTING YOUR RABBIT **VACCINATED**

Regular vaccination is required for continuous protection against RHD. Vaccination is low risk and is effective for the vast majority of rabbits. A small number of rabbits may become infected with rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV) without showing symptoms at all; this is called an "asymptomatic infection." Another very small group of vaccinated rabbits may develop mild symptoms and recover. This means biosecurity measures should still be implemented depending on your region and vaccination status of your rabbits.

Currently, a vaccine that protects against RHD is available in most states in the United States. Medgene Labs manufactures this vaccine and supplies veterinarians in states where the vaccine has been approved for distribution. The vaccine has been given emergency use authorization and further studies are needed to determine how often the vaccine needs to be administered, but at this time it is believed that it will be annually. Contact your veterinarian about the vaccine's availability and visit rabbit.org/faq-for-medgenes-rhdv2-vaccine for more information.

MULTI-PET HOUSEHOLDS

Those who live with non-rabbit companion animals may need to take additional biosecurity measures to protect their rabbits from RHD, as pets who roam outdoors and are then allowed inside may transmit the virus that causes RHD to your companion rabbit.

We recommend using a monthly flea treatment for rabbits, cats, and dogs, especially in regions where RHD affects wild and feral rabbits. Advantage II and Revolution flea and tick treatments are safe for use in rabbits. **Never use Frontline on a rabbit.** Keep all household pets away from all wild, feral, and unfamiliar rabbits — for example, do not feed cats or dogs rabbit meat — the meat could harbor RHDV and could be spread to your rabbit when your cat or dog licks your rabbit or drinks from their water bowl. We recommend keeping cats and dogs indoors whenever possible to reduce the risk that they could bring RHDV into your home. Leashing dogs during walks can also reduce the risk that the dog comes into contact with wild or feral rabbits. You might also consider washing your dog's feet or training them to wear booties outdoors. Keeping your rabbit's play and living spaces separate from your dogs and/or cats may also reduce the chance the rabbit comes into contact with virus tracked into your house from outside.

LEARN MORE ABOUT RHD

House Rabbit Society continually updates rabbit.org/rhdv with the best information about RHD and protecting your rabbit from this deadly disease. Subscribe to our newsletter at rabbit.org/signup to ensure that you receive timely alerts about RHD.

