

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Links

TPWD: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Confirmed in Texas, Die-Offs Reported

USDA Risk Identification: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Factsheet PDF

Emerging Risk Notice: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease in the US PDF

CFSPH: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Fact Sheet

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD) is a highly contagious viral disease that can affect both domestic and wild rabbit species. This disease is nearly always fatal and primarily affects adult rabbits. The viral agent, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV), is a calicivirus with two strains, RHDV-1 and RHDV-2, being reported in North America in recent years. RHDV-2 is known to affect wild rabbits. RHD is a Foreign Animal Disease (FAD), but has been detected in Canada, Washington and Ohio. Since March 23rd, detections of the disease in both wild and domestic rabbits have occurred in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Mexico. The first confirmed case in Texas was a domestic rabbit in Hockley County on April 10, 2020. The disease has since been confirmed in wild rabbits in Lubbock and Hudspeth Counties. There have been reports of mortality events in both wild cottontails (genus *Sylvilagus*) and jackrabbits (genus *Lepus*) in El Paso, Brewster, Hudspeth, Terrell, Lubbock and Pecos Counties.

Situation update 4/9/2021

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has received test results confirming that Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease virus 2 (RHDV2) was diagnosed in a wild black-tailed jackrabbit in Cottle County. This marks the first confirmed cases of RHDV2 in a wild rabbit in Texas in 2021 and follows the discovery of the disease in domestic rabbits in Tom Green County, which was announced in a recent [Texas Animal Health Commission \(TAHC\) news release](#). This is also the first discovery of the disease in a domestic rabbit of 2021.

TPWD has confirmed RHDV2 in the wild rabbit population of Brewster, Cottle, Culberson, El Paso, Gaines, Hale, Hockley, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Lubbock, Pecos, Presidio, Randall, Terrell, and Ward counties. If sick or dead wild rabbits are noticed, a local TPWD wildlife biologist should be contacted.

More information:

TAHC Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease, www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/rabbits/ For affected southwestern counties, see [USDA's Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Affected Counties Map](#).

Species Affected: Currently, RHDV appears only to affect rabbit species (lagomorphs). It is not known to affect humans, domestic livestock or pets (other than pet rabbits).

Clinical Signs: Often the only clinical sign is sudden death. In less acute cases, clinical signs may include the following: dullness/apathy, not eating, ocular and/or nasal hemorrhage and congestion of the conjunctiva. Some may develop neurological signs such as incoordination, excitement or seizure like episodes. Infections in young rabbits are usually sub-clinical and deaths are rare.

Transmission: The virus is shed in feces and other body fluids. Transmission may occur directly from animal to animal through ingestion, inhalation and mucous membranes. It may also spread indirectly by contaminated feed, water, clothing, equipment, waste, infected carcasses and insects. Potentially predators and scavengers that consume infected rabbits could mechanically spread the virus or excrete it in feces. The virus is very hardy and capable of surviving for extended periods of time in the environment and is resistant to extreme temperatures. The incubation period is thought to be 3-9 days.

Prevention: Domestic rabbits should be housed indoors if possible. Strict biosecurity should be practiced including cleaning and disinfecting cages and equipment; do not allow contact with other rabbits, wild or domestic; do not allow visitors in rabbitries or to handle rabbits, wear protective clothing (coveralls, shoe covers, gloves, etc.) when handling rabbits and change afterwards; control insects, birds, rodents and other animals that might serve as vectors and remove and properly dispose of carcasses promptly. Consult your local veterinarian if you experience sudden deaths or symptoms of RHD among your rabbits. It is difficult, if not impossible, to control the disease in the wild. Handling or moving sick wild rabbits or carcasses should be avoided if possible, but if needed, follow good biosecurity including wearing protective clothing and cleaning and disinfection of tools and equipment.

Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water
- Clean tools and equipment
- The virus is inactivated by 10 minutes exposure to:
 - Household Bleach (sodium hypochlorite) at 1:10 dilution
 - Sodium hydroxide 1% (Lye)
 - Chlorine dioxide at 10 PPM concentration
 - 1-Stroke EHViron®

Carcass Disposal: Deep burial, 3 feet recommended, or incineration.

Guidance for Rabbit Hunters:

- Do not harvest rabbits that appear sick
- Wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while handling and cleaning game.
- When cleaning harvested game, bag any remains and dispose of by placing in trash (however, check local ordinances concerning disposal of game carcasses).
- Do not dispose of remains where other rabbits or scavengers may have access to them.
- When done handling game, wash hands thoroughly with soap or disinfectant, and disinfect knives, equipment, and surfaces that were in contact with game.
- If later contact with live rabbits is possible, hunters should shower and change clothing as soon as possible after cleaning game.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling harvested animals.
- All game should be thoroughly cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees.

Sources

[Center for Food Security & Public Health: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease, Disease Information Technical Factsheet.](#)

[National Wildlife Health Center Wildlife Health Bulletin 2020-04.](#)

[United States Department of Agriculture Risk Identification: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Factsheet.](#)