Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) is a highly contagious and deadly disease caused by a calicivirus that affects both wild and domestic rabbits. It is not contagious to people or other animals. For the first time, the virus is causing deaths in rabbits and hares native to North America and is spreading rapidly.

Even if your rabbit is kept inside, they are still at risk of becoming infected with RHDV. While RHDV only affects rabbits, the disease can be transmitted to them by people or animals through contact with objects, animals, insects, or predator feces contaminated by the virus.

A sudden rabbit death is suspicious and should be reported to your veterinarian as a possible case of RHDV. Report sightings of sick or dead rabbits to your state wildlife officials; do not touch them.

PROTECTING YOUR RABBIT FROM RHDV

Fortunately, you can take many biosecurity measures to help reduce the risk of your rabbit becoming infected with RHDV, including the following:

- 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.
- Change your clothes and wash them twice after contact with other rabbits.
- Leave shoes outside your home.
- Disinfect objects that may be contaminated. Visit rabbit.org/rhdv for a list of RHDV-effective disinfectants.
- Keep mosquitos and flies out of your home with window and door screens.
- Know your hay and feed sources, and whether they are located in outbreak areas.
- Do not feed foraged plants, grasses, or tree branches.
- Quarantine any new rabbit for at least 14 days.
- For multi-pet households, keep dogs on-leash outside so they do not directly interact with wild rabbits, alive or dead, and wash their paws before going inside. Block dog access to areas where your rabbit lives or exercises. Keep cats indoors to prevent the virus from getting inside.
- Use a monthly flea treatment for rabbits, cats, and dogs.
- If you live in an outbreak area, contact your veterinarian to ask about vaccination. (see reverse)
GETTING YOUR RABBIT VACCINATED

An annual vaccine is required for continued protection against RHDV. Vaccination is expected to be effective for most rabbits—it may not prevent the disease in 100% of cases, but if vaccinated, it helps rabbits survive if they have been exposed to RHDV. Biosecurity measures should still be taken to protect vaccinated rabbits.

Currently, a vaccine is not widely available in North America. In outbreak areas, special permission is being given by state and federal agencies to veterinarians to import European vaccines. Contact your veterinarian to inquire about getting your rabbit vaccinated if where you live is affected. Visit rabbit.org/vet-listings for our state-by-state list of rabbit-savvy vets.

LEARN MORE ABOUT RHDV

As the North American RHDV outbreak develops, House Rabbit Society will continue to keep you updated at rabbit.org/rhdv with information about the spread of RHDV and how you can protect your rabbit. Subscribe to our newsletter at rabbit.org/signup to ensure you receive timely alerts about RHDV.

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