

Wyoming Livestock Board
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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Press Release on Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2

Attention rabbit owners:

An infectious and contagious viral disease of rabbits, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2), has recently been confirmed in New Mexico and Arizona in both domestic and wild rabbits. The disease has previously been seen in Washington State, New York, Ohio, British Columbia, and in Québec, Canada. Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 is highly contagious, fatal, and affects domestic, feral, and wild rabbits, including hares, jackrabbits and cottontails. The disease has not been identified in Wyoming, or surrounding states, to date. **This virus is NOT related to coronavirus or COVID-19.**

On April 2, 2020, animal health authorities confirmed RHDV2 in one wild black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) and in five wild desert cottontails (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) found dead in New Mexico, representing the first detection of this virus in wild rabbits in the United States. Additionally, RHDV2 was then confirmed from black-tailed jackrabbits and desert cottontails in Arizona.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease is caused by a calicivirus, a viral pathogen that has been shown to affect rabbits in North America, and in other parts of the world. Humans, non-rabbit domestic pets and livestock, have not been shown to develop clinical signs of RHDV2 infection. This viral pathogen can cause sudden death in rabbits, and can be spread through direct contact with other infected rabbits, their meat or their fur, or materials coming in contact with them. The virus can survive in the environment for an extended period of time.

The presence of RHDV2 in the U.S. domestic rabbit industry or in the wild rabbit populations could potentially impact the pet rabbit industry (e.g. 4-H, FFA), and other academic, industry, and hobby groups (e.g. exhibitions, laboratories, livestock (incl. meat), pelt and hunting).

Rabbit owners are advised to enhance their typical biosecurity measures, by not allowing visitors to rabbitries, keeping wild rabbits from co-mingling with domestic/pet rabbits (i.e. fencing), and limiting new animal introduction including a proper quarantine period for new individuals. Additionally, good biosecurity measures for rabbit owners should include; hand washing before and after working with rabbits, a change of clothing/footwear, and not sharing equipment with other rabbit owners.

Rabbit owners who have questions about this disease should contact their veterinarian. If a case is suspected, veterinarians should contact USDA APHIS or the Wyoming State Veterinarian's office at 307 857 4140 or 307 777 6440.

Additionally, anyone that comes into contact with dead game is asked to wear gloves if handling/cleaning carcasses, and to not harvest sick animals.

Wild rabbit deaths should be reported to the Wyoming Game & Fish Department's Wildlife Health Laboratory at 307-745-5865.

For additional information refer to the USDA APHIS VS published information listed below:

Disinfection Options for RHD Calicivirus_10-11-2018.pdf

RHDV1_1019.pdf

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease cfsph 2016.pdf

FactSheet Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Oct 2019.pdf

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Risk Notice June 2018

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Risk Notice Oct 2019