



MISSOURI
dept. of
Agriculture

RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE VIRUS 2 (RHDV₂)

wild rabbits

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Serotype 2 (RHDV₂) is a highly contagious and potentially fatal disease that affects both domestic and wild rabbits of all ages. This is a foreign animal disease (FAD) as recognized by the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) and is of high concern in the United States. RHDV₂ has been confirmed in several states.

Often the only clinical sign of the disease is sudden death, possibly with blood stained noses caused by internal bleeding. Other signs include fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, neurologic signs and difficulty breathing. The incubation period for the disease is one to five days.

The virus is spread via direct contact with infected rabbits, as well as their meat or fur. The virus can also be spread indirectly through contact with an infected rabbit's excretions, cages, bedding, feeders, equipment, etc. People can also serve as a fomite in the spread of the virus when handling an infected rabbit or their materials mentioned previously and then carrying the virus to a naïve rabbit. The virus can survive on an object for up to 105 days in dry, room temperatures.

RHDV₂ is not infectious to people or other domestic animals. However, rabbits can carry other diseases such as tularemia or plague, diseases that can cause serious illness in people. Do not handle or consume sick or dead rabbits, and do not allow pets to come into contact with or consume rabbit carcasses.

Guidelines for Wild Rabbits

A single dead rabbit is not cause for alarm unless there is a blood stained nose. For your safety, do not handle dead rabbits and wait for further instruction from the Missouri Department of Conservation. A cluster of wild rabbits found dead should be reported to Dr. Sherri Russell at Sherri.Russell@mdc.mo.gov or Jasmine Batten at Jasmine.Batten@mdc.mo.gov.



REPORT SUSPICIOUS CASES

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease is a reportable disease. If suspected, this disease should be immediately reported to the Missouri State Veterinarian's office at (573) 751-3377, or the USDA Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) at (573) 658-9850. A cluster of wild rabbits found dead should be reported to the Missouri Department of Conservation.

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