



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE DETECTED IN NAPA COUNTY

NAPA, CA – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has confirmed that earlier this month multiple wild rabbits in the Yountville area have died from Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD). RHD is a highly infectious and fatal virus in rabbits which has been found in multiple California counties since May 2020. This is the first known detection in Napa County. RHD is not a food safety concern, and the disease holds no risk to humans. All rabbit owners and veterinarians are advised to learn about RHD and how to protect rabbits.

RHD can be caused by two different, related viruses, RHDV1 and RHDV2. The current outbreak is due to the RHDV2 virus. It is highly contagious and affects rabbits, both domesticated and wild. Of rabbits that are exposed to the virus, almost all die. Many times, rabbits do not show signs before suddenly dying. If they do show signs, they may show fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, muscle spasms, breathing difficulties, blue colored lips, or bleeding from the mouth and nose. It can take between 1-5 days from the time a rabbit is exposed to the virus before it develops symptoms.

Rabbits can catch the virus by inhalation, ingestion, or by absorption through scrapes and wounds. It can be transmitted by direct contact with an infected rabbit or by contact with an object, person, clothing, or equipment that has encountered an affected rabbit. Rabbits are also able to catch the virus through consumption of contaminated water or food. Insects can spread the virus over long distances.

The most important way to prevent the disease is to take precautions to prevent exposing your rabbits to the virus and adhere to the following biosecurity recommendations to protect domestic rabbits:

- If rabbits are housed outside, house them off the ground when possible. Do not use material from outside for food or bedding.
- Wild rabbits. Do not allow wild rabbits to come into your yard and try to prevent dogs, cats, birds, and other animals from bringing rabbit carcasses onto your property. If you do find deceased wild rabbits, contact CDFW using their mortality reporting webpage.

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- Do not spread on your hands or clothing. After handling a rabbit, wash your hands. Avoid handling rabbits that are not yours. Before handling rabbits in different locations, change clothes and shoes as well as wash your hands. Ensure that everyone who visits your rabbits washes their hands thoroughly before touching your rabbits and wears protective clothing such as coveralls, shoe covers, hair covers and gloves.
- Avoid borrowing equipment. If you need to borrow equipment or if you buy used equipment, thoroughly scrub with a 10% bleach and water solution (1 part bleach, 9 parts water), leaving it to soak for at least 10 minutes before rinsing and letting dry.
- Do not add new rabbits. If you must, make sure they are kept in a separate housing area. Do not use the same equipment for the new and old rabbits.

As of October 2021, a U.S. manufactured RHDV vaccine (Medgene) is now available for distribution in California. Contact your primary veterinarian first to see if their veterinary clinic carries the RHDV vaccine. For more information on the Medgene vaccine, please visit their [website](#).

For More Information:

[Regulatory Diseases of Concern in Rabbits](#) – CDFA

[Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Quick Facts \(ca.gov\)](#) - CDFW

[Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease In the United States](#) - USDA 

[Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Factsheet](#) - USDA 

[List O: Disinfectants For Use Against RHDV2](#) – USDA

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For additional information the please contact pio@countyofnapa.org or by calling (707) 253-4111.