

**Wyoming Livestock Board
1934 Wyoott Drive
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-6440
WLSB Field Office 307-857-4140**

December 17, 2020

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 Confirmed in Wyoming

An infectious viral disease of rabbits, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2), has recently been confirmed in a wild eastern cottontail rabbit in Albany County, Wyoming. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and USDA APHIS have been conducting RHDV2 enhanced passive surveillance in wild and feral rabbits across the state. This disease has also been reported in New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah, in both domestic and wild rabbits. RHDV2 is highly contagious, fatal, and affects domestic, feral, and wild rabbits, including hares, jackrabbits and cottontails. **This virus is NOT related to coronavirus or COVID-19.**

Currently, there are no licensed RHDV2 vaccines produced in the United States. The Center for Veterinary Biologics is approving importation of two RHDV2 vaccines. Accredited veterinarians may import vaccine at the discretion of the state veterinarian and USDA Veterinarian in Charge. An APHIS import permit is required. The accredited veterinarian is responsible for international shipment logistics of the vaccine.

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 become infected with RHDV2. This viral pathogen can cause sudden death in rabbits, and can be spread through direct contact with other infected rabbits, their meat or fur, or materials coming in contact with them. The virus can survive in the environment for an extended period of time. The disease has previously been seen in Washington State, New York, Ohio, British Columbia, and in Québec, Canada.

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.

RHDV2 is a reportable disease in Wyoming and the United States and anyone suspecting the disease in domestic rabbits is required to report to the State Veterinarian and USDA APHIS immediately. If a case in a domestic rabbit is suspected, veterinarians should contact USDA APHIS or the Wyoming State Veterinarian's office at 307-857-4140 or 307-777-6440.

Any suspect wild rabbit deaths should be reported to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's State Wildlife Veterinarian at the Wildlife Health Laboratory, 307-745-5865. Additionally, anyone that comes into contact with dead game is advised to wear gloves if handling/cleaning carcasses, and to not harvest sick animals.

Visit <https://wlsb.state.wy.us/public/animal-health> for more information and resources on Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease.