



**National Wildlife Health Center  
Wildlife Health Bulletin 2018-05**

**Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease virus 2 Confirmed in a Domestic Rabbit in the United States**

**To: Natural Resource/Conservation Managers**

**From: Dr. Jonathan Sleeman, Center Director, USGS National Wildlife Health Center**

**Date: October 30, 2018**

The USGS National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) is providing this Bulletin to Tribal, State and Federal wildlife health partners for situational awareness concerning Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease virus 2 (RHDV2) in the United States. The presence of this virus was confirmed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in a recently released [report](#). RHDV2 is a foreign animal disease that prior to this report had not been detected in domestic, feral, or wild rabbits in the United States. Please distribute this Bulletin to your respective agency staff and local partners as appropriate.

According to the USDA's report, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease virus 2 was first confirmed in North America on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, in February 2018. The virus has now been found in feral rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) in at least ten locations in this region. On September 19, 2018 the USDA confirmed the first US case of RHDV2 from a domestic rabbit in Ohio. The USDA also reported that the strain of RHDV2 identified in the Ohio rabbit was similar to the strain found in British Columbia.

RHDV2 was first detected in France in 2010 and has since spread across Europe and several other countries, where it has been found in several species of wild rabbits. In 2015, RHDV2 was detected in free-ranging rabbits in Australia and spread across that continent within 18 months. In the United States, the USDA cautions that black-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*) and eastern cottontail rabbits (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) may be particularly susceptible to this virus. At this time, there are no known cases of this virus in wild North American rabbits. According to the USDA report, this virus poses no risk to humans or other animals. This same report indicates RHDV2 can be spread through 'contact with infected rabbits, their meat or fur, and materials having contact with those items.'

The USGS National Wildlife Health Center is alerting partners to be vigilant for morbidity or mortality events involving wild rabbits and to promptly submit carcasses from these events for diagnostic evaluation. Wildlife professionals investigating morbidity or mortality events involving rabbits, or who handle live wild rabbits, should consider cleaning and disinfecting equipment with 10% sodium hydroxide or 1-2% formalin that is used at these locations to limit spread of any potential pathogens.

**General safety guidelines for hunters:**

- Do not handle or eat sick game.
- Field dress and prepare game outdoors or in a well-ventilated area.
- Wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while handling and cleaning game.
- When done handling game, wash hands thoroughly with soap or disinfectant, and clean knives, equipment and surfaces that were in contact with game.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling animals. All game should be thoroughly cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees.

**Resources:**

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service bulletin

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/1f9498f>

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service bulletin

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/2109b9f>

USDA Emerging Disease Notice – Animal Health

[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/downloads/Rabbit%20Hemorrhagic%20Disease\\_June%202018.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/Rabbit%20Hemorrhagic%20Disease_June%202018.pdf)

Center for Food Security and Public Health – Iowa State University

[http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabbit\\_hemorrhagic\\_disease.pdf](http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabbit_hemorrhagic_disease.pdf)

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**Disease Investigation Services**

To request diagnostic services or report wildlife mortality, please contact the NWHC at **608-270-2480** or by email at [NWHC-epi@usgs.gov](mailto:NWHC-epi@usgs.gov), and a field epidemiologist will be available to discuss the case. To report wildlife mortality events in Hawaii or Pacific Island territories, please contact the Honolulu Field Station at 808-792-9520 or email Thierry Work at [thierry\\_work@usgs.gov](mailto:thierry_work@usgs.gov).

Further information about our services can be found at [www.usgs.gov/nwhc/services](http://www.usgs.gov/nwhc/services). To learn more about submitting samples and reporting events, go to [www.usgs.gov/nwhc/submit](http://www.usgs.gov/nwhc/submit) and check out the [Wildlife Mortality Reporting and Diagnostic Services Request Worksheet](#).

To see past Wildlife Health Bulletins, click [here](#).

WILDLIFE HEALTH BULLETINS are distributed to natural resource/conservation agencies to provide and promote information exchange about significant wildlife health threats. If you would like to be added to or removed from the mailing list for these Bulletins, please contact Natalie Nguyen at 608-270-2416 or e-mail: [nwhcoutreachdb@usgs.gov](mailto:nwhcoutreachdb@usgs.gov).