



## GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Gary W. Black, Commissioner

[www.agr.georgia.gov](http://www.agr.georgia.gov)

Date: April 8, 2021

To: Georgia Veterinarians and Rabbit Owners

Subject: Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Update

From: Robert M. Cobb, Jr., DVM  
State Veterinarian

The Georgia Department of Agriculture's (GDA) Animal Industry Division wants to remind citizens of the ongoing risk of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2) after recent detections in Florida (January 2021) and Arkansas (March 2021). There have been no cases found in Georgia at this time.

RHDV2 is a highly contagious Calicivirus that affects domestic rabbits, as well as wild or feral rabbits and hares. It does not affect other domestic animals (i.e., dogs, cats, horses, cattle, goats, or sheep, etc.) and it does not affect humans. The virus is shed by infected rabbits, and transmitted through direct contact, fomites (bedding, water, feed, hay, boots, clothing, cages, equipment etc.), and mechanical vectors (i.e., insects). The virus is hardy in the environment, especially when protected by organic material, and survives in extreme temperatures. Clinical signs for RHDV2 in rabbits range from sudden death to anorexia, lethargy, respiratory signs, and bloodstained noses or mouths.

Good [biosecurity practices](#) are the best defense against RHDV2 infection and rabbit owners are strongly advised to take appropriate measures to protect rabbitries. Briefly, here are some biosecurity best practices to follow:

- Keep domestic rabbits separate from other pets, livestock, and wild animals and minimize visitors to your rabbitry.
- Wash hands thoroughly before entering rabbit housing areas or interacting with domestic rabbits.
- Use dedicated clothing and footwear when interacting with domestic rabbits.
- Clean and disinfect equipment, materials, and surfaces used for rabbit care.
- Do not share equipment, grooming tools, feeding implements, etc.
- Quarantine newly acquired animals from other pets and livestock for at least 30 days.
- Establish a working relationship with a veterinarian to review biosecurity practices and health concerns.

RHDV2 is a reportable Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) in Georgia. Breeders experiencing a high number of dead or sick rabbits can report to the State Veterinarian's office at 404-656-3667 or the office of the USDA Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) at 770-761-5420. Similarly, hunters and outdoor enthusiasts that encounter dead or sick rabbits can report findings to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources 706-557-3333 or USDA Wildlife Services 706-546-5637.

For more information on national RHDV2 outbreak areas, please visit <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/maps/animal-health/rhd>.

You can find resources on RHDV2 at our website: <http://agr.georgia.gov/rabbit-hemorrhagic-disease-resources.aspx>