



For Immediate Release
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Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease in Texas

Situational Update #4

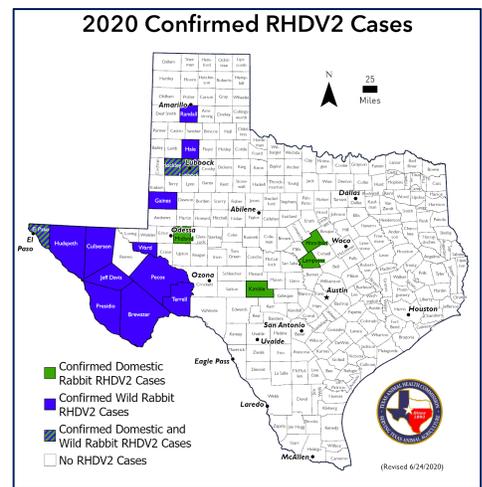
AUSTIN, TX – Since May 13, 2020, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has received only one new confirmation of rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus 2 (RHDV2) in domestic rabbits on a Kimble County premises. RHDV2 was first discovered in domestic Texas rabbits in April 2020, and confirmations have since been identified in domestic rabbits in the following counties: El Paso, Hamilton, Hockley, Kimble, Lampasas, Lubbock and Midland.

RHDV2 is a fatal, viral disease that affects both domestic and wild rabbits, including hares, jackrabbits and cottontails. It does not affect humans, or other animal species.

There is a preventative vaccine available, and Texas veterinarians have succeeded in securing the vaccine for use in rabbits. Rabbit owners should reach out to their private veterinarian to coordinate vaccine procurement and utilization.

“The Commission would like to remind all rabbit owners and breeders to continue robust biosecurity practices on their farms and in their homes whether they choose to vaccinate or not,” said Dr. Andy Schwartz, State Veterinarian and TAHC Executive Director.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has confirmed RHDV2 in the wild rabbit population of Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Gaines, Hale, Hockley, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Lubbock, Pecos, Presidio, Randall, Terrell, and Ward counties. “We continue to receive reports of dead rabbits in the Trans Pecos and Panhandle regions of the state, said Dr. Bob Dittmar, TPWD wildlife veterinarian.” If people notice sick or dead wild rabbits, they should contact their [local TPWD wildlife biologist](#). To learn more about RHDV2 in wild rabbits, visit the [TPWD website](#).



Texas County	Domestic Rabbit Premises
El Paso	2
Hamilton	1
Hockley	1
Kimble	1
Lampasas	1
Lubbock	1
Midland	1

This highly contagious foreign animal disease spreads between rabbits through contact with infected rabbits or carcasses, their meat or fur, or contact with contaminated food, water, or materials. RHDV2 can persist in the environment for a very long time. These factors make disease control efforts extremely challenging once it is in the wild rabbit populations.

Rabbit owners who have questions about RHDV2 or observe sudden death in their rabbits should contact their private veterinarian. Private veterinarians are requested to contact the USDA-APHIS or the TAHC to report any



suspected cases at 1-800-550-8242. Report all unusual mass morbidity (sickness) or mortality (deaths) events to the TAHC.

“The TAHC encourages rabbit owners to keep their rabbits secure at home and cease all unnecessary movement of rabbits to aid in preventing further exposure to or transmission of the virus,” said Dr. Susan Rollo, State Epidemiologist. “Some states may begin to enforce movement restrictions on rabbits entering from other RHDV2 infected states. So, if you have plans for interstate movement, be sure to call the state of destination for any specific entry requirements.”

Protecting Your Rabbits with Biosecurity

The following procedures can reduce the chance of RHDV2 and other contagious diseases from affecting domestic rabbits. For a printable version, [click here](#).

- House rabbits indoors if possible.
- Do not allow pet, feral, or wild rabbits to come in contact with your rabbits or gain entry to the facility or home.
- Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water between pens and before and after entering your rabbit area.
- Keep a closed rabbitry. Do not introduce new rabbits from unknown or untrusted sources.
- If you bring new rabbits into your facility or home, keep them separated from your existing rabbits. Use separate equipment for newly acquired or sick rabbits to avoid spreading disease.
- Control flies, rats, cats, dogs, birds, etc. that can physically move the virus around on their feet or body.
- Do not collect outdoor forage and browse to feed rabbits since it may be contaminated.
- Remove brush, grass, weeds, trash, and debris from the rabbitry to reduce rodents.
- Protect feed from contamination by flies, birds, rodents, etc.
- Remove and properly dispose (i.e. bury or incinerate) of dead rabbits promptly.
- When moving rabbits or restocking pens disinfect all equipment and cages with 10% bleach mixed with water or other approved products. Properly dispose of bedding. Items made of wood are difficult to disinfect and best discarded.
- Breeders should review their biosecurity plans for gaps and all rabbit owners should establish a working relationship with a veterinarian to review biosecurity practices for identification and closure of possible gaps.

Visit https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/rabbits/ for more information and resources on rabbit hemorrhagic disease. The TAHC will send weekly RHDV2 updates as long as confirmations are received. To receive updates, subscribe to the rabbit email distribution list [here](#).

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The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) was established in 1893 as the Livestock Sanitary Commission and charged with protecting the state's domestic animals "from all contagious or infectious diseases of a malignant character." TAHC remains true to this charge while evolving with the times to protect the health and marketability of all Texas livestock and poultry. Learn more about the TAHC by visiting www.tahc.texas.gov.