



Riparian brush rabbit photo by Moose Peterson

Quick Facts About Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease virus type 2 (RHDV2) was confirmed in a wild rabbit population in California for the first time in early May 2020. RHDV2 is highly contagious and lethal to both wild and domestic rabbits, hares and pikas.

RHDV2 only affects rabbit species – it is not known to affect humans, livestock or pets other than rabbits.

If it spreads, RHDV2 has the potential to cause significant declines of rabbit populations in California, including the endangered riparian brush rabbit. You can help the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's efforts to fight RHDV2 by reporting sightings of sick or dead rabbits, and taking precautions to not spread the virus to new areas.

HOW IS RHDV2 TRANSMITTED?

The virus is transmitted between rabbits through contact with other infected rabbits or carcasses, their meat or their fur, contaminated food or water, or materials coming into contact with them. People can also inadvertently spread the virus to new areas. The virus can persist in the environment for a very long time, making disease control efforts extremely challenging once it is in wild rabbit populations.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

Infected rabbits, jackrabbits or hares infected may suffer swelling, internal bleeding and liver damage. Often, disease onset is rapid, so only dead rabbits might be seen. A rabbit that has died from RHDV2 may have blood on its mouth or nose.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Sightings of sick rabbits, jackrabbits, hares or pikas exhibiting symptoms of RHDV2 – or any sighting of multiple dead rabbits – should be reported to CDFW. Do not handle or consume sick wildlife, or allow pets to come into contact with wildlife carcasses. Although RHDV2 does not affect people or pets, other diseases that can (such as plague or tularemia) occasionally cause rabbit die-offs.

If you've been recreating outdoors, please take care to wash your clothing and disinfect your footwear and equipment before traveling to other areas or interacting with domestic rabbits. Footwear and equipment should be disinfected by washing in household bleach diluted 1:10 with water for at least 10 minutes before rinsing.

Hunters should wear gloves when field dressing rabbits, bury any remains onsite deep enough to prevent scavenging and wash their hands thoroughly when finished. Meat from healthy rabbits harvested by hunters is safe to consume when cooked thoroughly. Falconers should avoid flying birds in areas with known RHDV2 outbreaks, prevent their birds from consuming dead or diseased rabbits, and take precautions to sanitize gear between outings.



Please report sightings of sick or dead wild rabbits, jackrabbits, hares or pikas to the CDFW Wildlife Investigations Lab at (916) 358-2790 or file an [online mortality report](#) through CDFW's website.