



State of Utah

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News Release For Immediate Release

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Fatal Rabbit Disease Detected in Utah

(Salt Lake City) Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV2), is a highly fatal disease that affects rabbits. The fatal sickness has been spreading across the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico and has now been detected in Utah. A positive case was recently confirmed in a domestic rabbit in Sanpete County.

RHDV2 is a highly contagious disease of wild and domestic rabbits that can kill 80-100% of infected animals. In most cases, there are rarely any signs of the illness and the animal often dies within 6-24 hours. Rabbits may have a fever, nervous signs, difficulty breathing, and frothy blood coming from their noses just prior to death. RHDV2 does not affect people or other animals. There is no cure for RHDV2, and vaccines must be imported from Europe by a veterinarian.

The virus can survive in the environment for months and can be spread by contact with infected rabbits, objects, people, or even shoes that have been contaminated by rabbit feces.

“The best way for Utah rabbit owners to protect their rabbits is to practice good biosecurity,” says Dr. Amanda Price, Utah Assistant State Veterinarian. “Wash your hands and change your clothes before handling your rabbits if you have been around other rabbits or in areas with wild rabbits. Keep your rabbits in hutches off the ground or inside if possible, and try to keep wild rabbits, rodents, and other animals away from your rabbits and their food.”

Unexplained dead pet rabbits should be taken to their veterinarian and reported to the state veterinarian, dead wild rabbits should be reported to the regional Division of Wildlife Resources office. For more information about RHDV2 can visit the UDAF website at: ag.utah.gov or bit.ly/UtahRHD.

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