



For Immediate Release
April 14, 2020

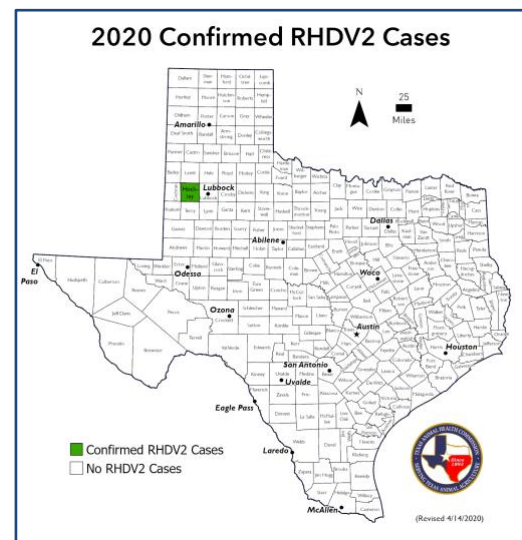
Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Confirmed in Hockley County

AUSTIN, TX – The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) was notified of the presence of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2) in domestic rabbits on a Hockley County premises on April 10, 2020. This is the first confirmed case of RHDV2 in Texas.

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

The RHDV2 strain is a rare disease in the U.S. and was first identified on several islands in Washington State in July 2019. Since that time, it has been confirmed in both wild and domestic rabbits in New Mexico and Arizona.

The highly contagious foreign animal disease spreads between rabbits through contact with infected rabbits or carcasses, their meat or their fur, contaminated food or water, or materials coming in contact with them. 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.



"Vaccines are not available or approved for use in Texas at this time," said Dr. Andy Schwartz, State Veterinarian and TAHC Executive Director. "It is of the utmost importance that rabbit owners practice strong biosecurity in order to protect and mitigate the risk of disease in their rabbit herds."

Protecting Your Rabbits with Biosecurity

The following procedures can reduce the chance of RHDV2 and other contagious diseases from affecting domestic rabbits.

- 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.

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.

“Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) will be monitoring wild rabbit populations to determine the extent of the disease,” said Dr. Robert Dittmar, TPWD wildlife veterinarian. “RHDV2 has not yet been confirmed in the Texas wild rabbit population, however we have seen an increase of reported mortalities in the Trans Pecos and Panhandle areas. TPWD has submitted samples to the National Wildlife Health Center for testing and are awaiting results. People can contact their [local TPWD wildlife biologist](#) if they notice sick or dead rabbits. We want to reassure everyone this disease does not affect people or pets. TPWD will work with TAHC to keep the public informed as we learn more about the extent and severity of the disease.”

The TAHC is responding to RHDV2 alongside the United States Department of Agriculture, Veterinary Services (USDA-VS), and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Visit https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/rabbits/ for more information about 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.