

## RHDV2 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease is a fatal disease in rabbits and is considered a foreign animal disease in the United States. This disease is caused by several virus strains. RHDV2 is highly contagious strain and, unlike other rabbit hemorrhagic disease viruses, it affects both domestic and wild rabbits, including jackrabbits and cottontails. Many times the only signs of the disease are sudden death and blood stained noses caused by internal bleeding. Infected rabbits may also develop a fever, be hesitant to eat, or show respiratory or nervous signs.

As of July 28, 2020, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2) has been confirmed in 10 US States since 2018 (Ohio, Washington, New York, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, California and Utah).

This disease affects both domestic and wild lagomorph species. Since March 2020, RHDV2 has been confirmed in four wild species: Black-tailed jackrabbit, Desert cottontail, Antelope jackrabbit and Mountain cottontail. Detections of RHDV2 have also been confirmed in domestic rabbits and feral domestic rabbits.

USDA-APHIS has created a Coordinating Cell for the detection, response and communication of findings in this investigation. Vaccine licensing and importation falls under the USDA: APHIS: Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB).

For more information on RHDV2 go to:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/sa-epidemiology-animalhealth-ceah/ri>

### Q: Is there a vaccine for RHDV2?

**A:** There is no licensed vaccine for RHDV2 in the United States. There are 2 killed vaccines for RHDV2 licensed in the European Union (EU) which may be used in the USA under special permit.

**Product:** Filavac VHD K C+V

**Producer:** Filavie

**Product:** Eravac RHDV-2

**Producer:** Hipra

A 3<sup>rd</sup> EU vaccine, Nobivac, is not eligible for use since it is a live, genetically modified product.

### Q: What can rabbit owners do to get the vaccine in our area?

**A:** The two killed EU unlicensed vaccines are being allowed for emergency use in States with confirmed cases of RHDV2 and only under the direction of the State Animal Health Officials. If your State has confirmed cases, contact your regular veterinarian, who can request permission to use the vaccine from the State Veterinarian. Special Permit applications for importation will only be considered with the approval of the State Veterinarian.

### Q: What is required for rabbits to receive the special imported vaccine?

**A:** The vaccine must be administered by a licensed veterinarian to individually identified rabbits and records of vaccination must be kept by the veterinary practice. The level of identification required and the length of time for record retention is specified by the State Veterinarian. Rabbit owners should keep proof of vaccination with their rabbits. Vaccinated domestic rabbits should not be released into the wild.

### Q: How much does the vaccine cost?

**A:** The charge of the vaccine is determined by your veterinarian. There are no charges for the vaccine or import permit by USDA APHIS.



**Q: What can Veterinarians do to import the vaccine?**

**A:** Your veterinarian may apply for a permit to import either of the two killed vaccines ONLY WITH the approval of their State Veterinarian.

- The importer will need to work with the EU vaccine company directly or via a broker.
- Imported vaccine is an unlicensed product and can't be further distributed or sold. The importer (licensed veterinarian or State veterinarian) will need to import the product using a valid permit. Some flexibility for sharing imported product has been allowed with State Veterinarian authorization.
- The import application (Form 2005) can be accessed here: [https://ncahappspub.aphis.usda.gov/NC\\_AHPortal/public/](https://ncahappspub.aphis.usda.gov/NC_AHPortal/public/)
- Step by step instructions for access and filling out the form: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/vet\\_biologics/publications/27-aphis2005-researchandevaluation.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/vet_biologics/publications/27-aphis2005-researchandevaluation.pdf)

**Q: Can USDA approve the vaccine for licensure?**

**A:** USDA is eager to work with companies interested in licensure. The company that manufactures the vaccine must initiate the process and apply for US licensure. Additional information may be found here: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/veterinary-biologics/sa\\_license\\_biologic/ct\\_vb\\_new\\_applicants](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/veterinary-biologics/sa_license_biologic/ct_vb_new_applicants)

**Q: Is the European vaccine effective against the strain of RHDV2 that we have in the US?**

**A:** USDA has a limited amount of information available on the EU vaccines and no supporting data to which to provide

recommended usage. USDA APHIS reviewed the vaccine products to ensure no foreign animal disease. USDA APHIS has no information on the efficacy of the two vaccines.

**Q: Does the vaccine offer complete protection against RHDV2? How long does the immunity last?**

**A:** USDA APHIS has not evaluated the vaccine for efficacy and length of immunity, as would normally happen during the licensing process.

**Q: My vet told me that our rabbits need to have permanent identification. Why is this needed?**

**A:** This decision should be made between the rabbit owner and veterinarian, and in compliance with any State regulations. Accurate vaccination information is required for U.S. disease response efforts being reported to the World Animal Health Organization. It may also be part of the accountability process that State Veterinarians expect for permitting the use of unlicensed vaccine in their state. Rabbits that are vaccinated cannot be distinguished serologically from rabbits that are infected with RHDV2; rabbit owners are advised to maintain records of proof of vaccination.

**Q: What options exist for permanent identification?**

**A:** Rabbits may receive a tattoo, microchip or leg banding. This decision should be made between the rabbit owner and veterinarian, and in compliance with any State regulations.

**Q: How many doses of the vaccine are available and how many will go to each state?**

**A:** USDA APHIS has not limited the amount of vaccine imported into states with confirmed positive cases.

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