



For Immediate Release
 April 22, 2020

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Confirmed in El Paso County

Situational Update #1

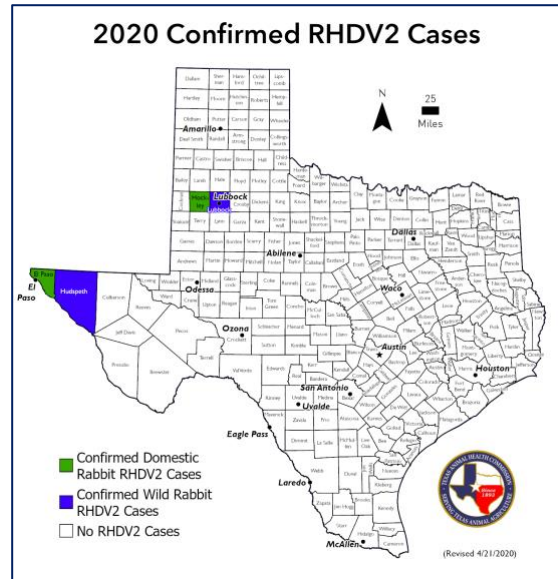
AUSTIN, TX – Since Tuesday, April 14, 2020, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has received two new confirmed cases of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2) in domestic rabbits in El Paso County. To date, there have been 3 confirmed cases of RHDV2 in domestic Texas rabbits.

The first case of RHDV2 in Texas was found in domestic rabbits on a Hockley County premises on April 10, 2020. Since that time, Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease was confirmed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) in a wild black-tailed jackrabbit in Lubbock County and a wild cottontail rabbit in Hudspeth County. To learn more about the wild rabbit confirmations, visit the [TPWD website](#).

"The Commission would like to urge all rabbit owners and breeders to protect their rabbits from diseases like RHDV2 by increasing biosecurity on their farms and in their homes," said Dr. Andy Schwartz, State Veterinarian and TAHC Executive Director. "At this time, biosecurity is the best thing you can do. We are currently researching vaccine options alongside private veterinarians, but because there is no vaccine available in Texas at this time, please work hard to practice cleanliness, isolate your rabbits, and monitor your rabbits' health closely."

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 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.



2020 Texas RHDV2 Summary		
Texas County	Domestic Rabbit Premises Confirmed Positive	Wild Rabbits Confirmed Positive
El Paso	2	0
Hockley	1	0
Hudspeth	0	1
Lubbock	0	1



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.

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. Bob Dittmar, TPWD wildlife veterinarian. “We are continuing to receive reports of dead rabbits from the western part of the state.” 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 other animals. The TPWD will work with the TAHC to keep the public informed as we learn more about the extent and severity of the disease.”

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.