



# June 2020 Bulletin

State of Nevada Board of Veterinary  
Medical Examiners

## Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) Report

*We spoke with Nevada Department of Wildlife Health Specialist-Veterinarian, Nate Lahue DVM, MPVM regarding RHDV. Here's what Dr. Lahue had to say.*

**This disease has an interesting history, what can you tell me about the introduction of this disease in Australia?** For nearly a century, the Australian government sought solutions to the uncontrolled feral rabbit population after the introduction of the European rabbit. In 1991, they began to research this group of viruses as a potential biological control agent. Unfortunately, the disease escaped the containment facility in 1995 and killed millions of wild rabbits within a few months.



**Can you tell me about the recent outbreaks in the United States?** Initially, the disease was not believed to affect North American rabbits because the RHDV-1 genotype did not infect these rabbit species, but unfortunately the RHDV-2 genotype can. The first cases were reported in the Southwest. To date, cases have been seen in New Mexico, California, Arizona, Colorado, and Texas. The disease is characterized by acute hepatic necrosis leading to disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC). The reports describe dreadful sights with hundreds of dead wild rabbits encountered along the landscape. The wild species affected included the desert cottontails, black-tailed jackrabbits, and mountain cottontails. Domestic species were infected as well. For those who are interested in tracking disease emergence, the Wildlife Health Information Sharing Partnership website (<https://whispers.usgs.gov/home>) is an excellent resource.

**So this disease has not made it to our state?** There is a single report of an infected domestic rabbit in Nevada, but it is believed this rabbit was adopted from out of state. Fortunately, this disease has not made it to our state's wild rabbit population.

**What Nevada wildlife species could be infected?** We know it can affect our desert cottontails, black-tailed jackrabbits, and mountain cottontails and we assume our white-tailed jackrabbits and pygmy rabbits are susceptible. Pikas are close cousins to rabbits, so there is a potential they could be susceptible as well.

**What could the impact be if this disease makes it to Nevada?** There are several characteristic of this disease that would make it's introduction problematic. It is possible the mortality rate of this disease exceeds 60% and it is very contagious. The viruses are also very hardy and can persist in the environment for extended periods. For example, there is one report of active virus particles persisting on a carcass for 100 days in the right environment.

**How could this disease get to our state?** This disease can easily move from state to state if we are not vigilant. Long distance movement by fomites and/or scavengers is one area of major concern. Also, since shelters are not accepting rabbits due to concerns of this disease, it is possible people will release domestic rabbits into the wild where they could come into contact with wild species.

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### It sounds like this disease could wreak havoc on our wild rabbit population.

It not just our rabbits we should worry about. A precipitous drop in our wild rabbit population could have far reaching ramifications since rabbits are a source of food for many other species. Predators could suffer population declines from starvation or they could be forced to change prey species. This prey switching could also lead predators to migrate outside their typical regions and possibly even into residential areas. We don't fully understand the impact this disease would have on our state. We would be in uncharted territory.

### What can our Nevada veterinarians do to help?



If you receive a call about a dead or diseased wild rabbit, tell your client to call the Department of Wildlife Dispatch at (775) 688-1331. Do not tell them to bring the rabbit into your clinic. This is a World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) reportable disease. All cases in any species, wild or domestic, must be reported to our state veterinarian, Dr. Amy Mitchell, at the Department of Agriculture (702) 668-4551.

### What if they show up with a sick wild rabbit?

You should humanely euthanize the rabbit, place the body into two sealed bags, and call the Department of Wildlife Dispatch. Do not preform a post mortem exam. Remember these viruses are very hardy and precautions should be taken to avoid contamination of your staff and your facility. This disease will not spread to companion animal species other than rabbits, but everyone should take precautions to avoid this disease from reaching our wild and domestic rabbits. The USDA has published disinfection guidelines. 10% bleach and Virkon S are effective.

## Reportable Disease Reminder

Since we all have an eye to the public communicability of disease in humans right now and recognize how important reporting can be in the human world during this global pandemic, the Board wanted to take the time for a brief reminder about reportable animal disease in Nevada. Because of quick reporting and timely response the information regarding the presence of the disease was identified, but the spread of the virus became a part of a multi-state outbreak that is currently being monitored by several state agencies in New Mexico, Arizona, and western Texas. This outbreak emphasizes and solidifies the important that practitioners play in the identification of virulent diseases that can spread and cause significant suffering to animals and owners.

From bees to bunnies, click [here](http://agri.nv.gov/Animals/Animal_Disease/Animal_Disease_Home/) to find the full list of animal diseases that require reporting in Nevada. All reports of animal disease findings must be reported to the State Veterinarian, Dr. Amy Mitchell. More information regarding hours of operation, services and fees, please visit [http://agri.nv.gov/Animals/Animal\\_Disease/Animal\\_Disease\\_Home/](http://agri.nv.gov/Animals/Animal_Disease/Animal_Disease_Home/)





Nevada has a New State  
Veterinarian-  
Dr. Amy Mitchell, DVM

After Dr. David Thain served as the Interim State Veterinarian for the past few months, the Nevada Department of Agriculture has named Amy Mitchell, DVM as the new permanent State Veterinarian for Nevada. Dr. Mitchell will be overseeing the State's animal health programs, regulatory procedures and NDA laboratories. Dr. Mitchell studied at the University of Kansas and the University of Georgia, prior to earning her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and has experience in both small and large animal medicine. The Board has always shared a great working relationship with the State Veterinarian, and we all wish Dr. Mitchell the best as Nevada's State Veterinarian.

## Upcoming Board Meetings:

Currently, meetings are being held via teleconference. Information for participating in meetings can be obtained by contacting our office or by joining our mailing list. Please email [vetbdinfo@vetboard.nv.gov](mailto:vetbdinfo@vetboard.nv.gov) for information regarding upcoming meetings or to join the mailing list.

June 11, 2020

July 23, 2020



## CE CORNER

Please refer to NAC 638.042 for a complete list of the types of courses approved the Board to ensure that CE you are taking is approved.

- DVM360 has launched a specific CE page for courses that are offered remotely (<https://connect.dvm360.com/cecenter/spring2020/>)
- Pet Poison Helpline is hosting a webinar with AVMA regarding employee health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic on June 18: (<https://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/webinar/employee-health-safety/>)
- Vet Girl on the Run is hosting a free 1 hour RACE approved webinar on June 9 (<https://vetgirlontherun.com/webinars/june-9-2020-the-urgency-of-itch-meeting-owner-expectations-with-best-medicine-for-short-and-long-term-management-of-your-allergic-patients/>)
- Vet Girl on the Run is hosting a free 1 hour RACE approved webinar on June 7 (<https://vetgirlontherun.com/webinars/june-7-2020-practice-essentials-to-managing-otitis/>)
- Cornell is hosting a free 1 hour webinar on June 9 ([https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Z-05G7SaT1u4R0qxDrrTPA](https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Z-05G7SaT1u4R0qxDrrTPA))
- NAVTA has a compiled list of free CE education that can be earned online, click here for more information: [https://www.navta.net/page/continuing\\_education](https://www.navta.net/page/continuing_education)