

RABBITS AND RHD



What is Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD)?

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD), caused by the rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), is a highly contagious, acute and fatal disease of rabbits. It does not affect humans or any other animal species. It is a notifiable animal disease in Singapore and to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

How does RHDV spread?

It can be transmitted through contact with infected animals and their discharge, contaminated objects and surfaces e.g. shoes, clothing, bedding or containers, or insects such as flies.

How does it affect your rabbit?

The risk of disease is low for rabbits that are housed indoors with minimal exposure to the

outdoors and to rabbits from other households. Once your rabbit is infected, it usually takes about 1-5 days for them to fall sick, but may take up to 9 days. Clinical signs may include poor appetite, fever, depression, nervous signs such as leg paddling or seizures, groans and cries, discharge from the nose or shortness of breath. Death may occur within 12-36 hours once clinical signs develop. Treatment is mainly supportive, for instance in the form of fluid therapy. Recovered animals should be kept at home for at least one month.

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How to Protect your Rabbit



Keep the housing and environment of your rabbit clean and free of insects such as mosquitoes and flies. Use RHD-effective disinfectants such as bleach at the correct concentration as indicated on the label. Solution needs to be in contact with the cleaned surface for at least 5 minutes before being wiped off



Bring your rabbit for veterinary treatment immediately if you observe a loss of appetite and lethargy in your rabbit, and inform your veterinarian of your rabbit's health, husbandry and movement history



Keep your rabbit indoors and minimise its contact with visitors and other rabbits, especially if you are not aware of the rabbits' health status



Vaccination of healthy rabbits can help to reduce the risk of infection. Consult your veterinarian on whether your rabbit is a good candidate for the RHD vaccination. However, do note that vaccines are not a replacement for good biosecurity practices.



Practise good personal hygiene, such as washing your hands with soap before and after being in contact with your pet and other animals

If you observe your rabbit to be unwell, take it to a veterinarian for a physical examination.