

# Rabbit haemorrhagic disease:

## What you need to know

First discovered in 1984 in China's Jiangsu province, the rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) is a fatal and extremely contagious viral disease. It has killed millions of wild and domestic rabbits worldwide. A different strain of the disease, rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus 2 (RHDV2), was detected for the first time in Singapore on Sept 16 by the Animal and Veterinary Service, and has killed eight domestic rabbits.

### SYMPTOMS

#### LETHARGY

In some cases, rabbits will become inactive and reluctant to move about.

#### BLEEDING FROM NOSE AND MOUTH

Rabbits may experience bloody discharge from the nose and mouth. Sometimes, there may be blood present in faeces or urine.

#### JAUNDICE

Affected rabbits may sometimes develop signs of yellowing in areas such as the sclera, the white portion of the eye.



#### HIGH FEVER

Rabbits may develop a fever of up to 42 deg C.

#### ANOREXIA

Rabbits may display a loss of appetite when affected, refusing any form of sustenance.

#### INTERNAL DAMAGE

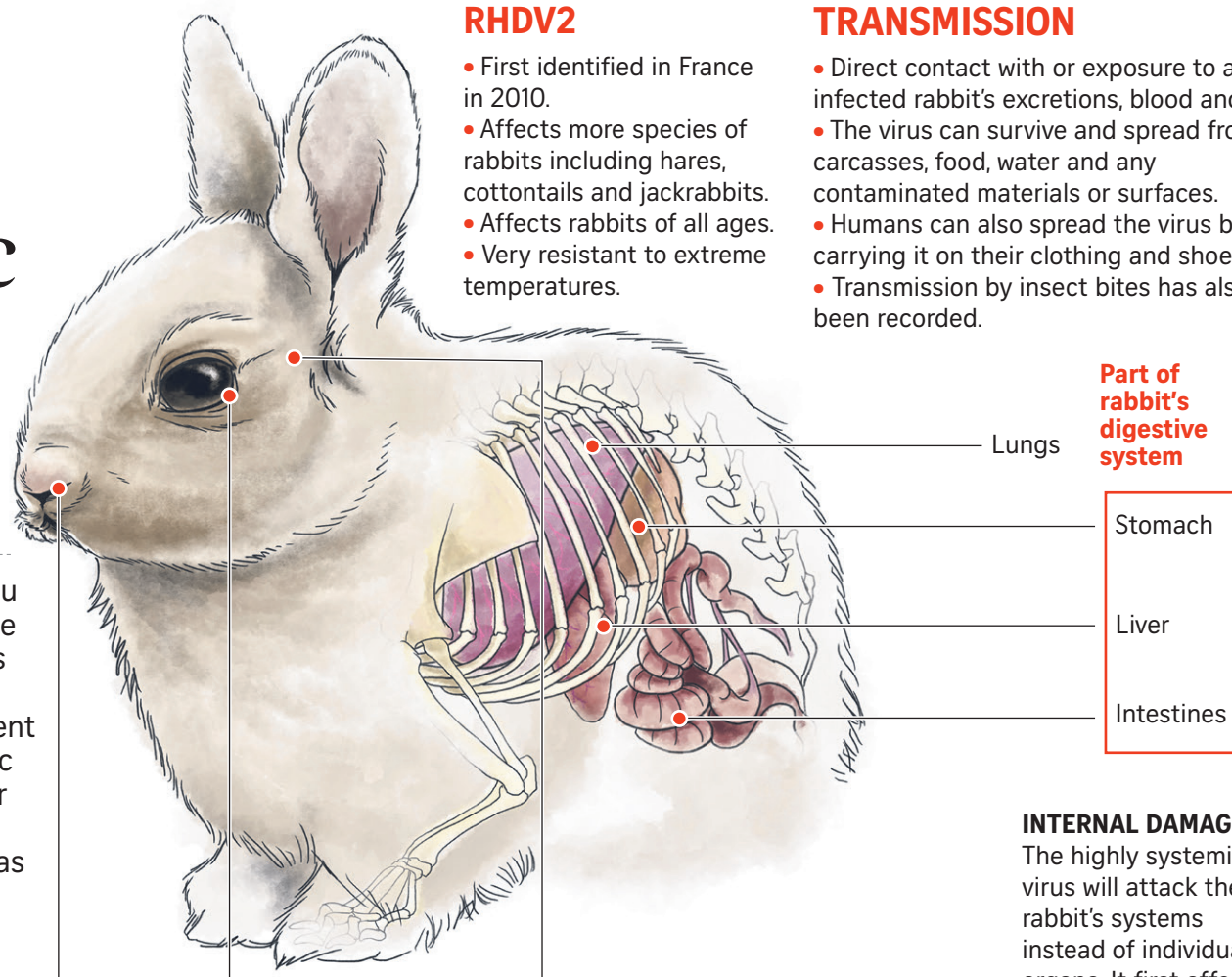
The highly systemic virus will attack the rabbit's systems instead of individual organs. It first affects the respiratory system which, in turn, affects the digestive system, causing bloating. Eventually, leading to ileus, where the bowels stop working correctly.

### RHDV2

- First identified in France in 2010.
- Affects more species of rabbits including hares, cottontails and jackrabbits.
- Affects rabbits of all ages.
- Very resistant to extreme temperatures.

### TRANSMISSION

- Direct contact with or exposure to an infected rabbit's excretions, blood and fur.
- The virus can survive and spread from carcasses, food, water and any contaminated materials or surfaces.
- Humans can also spread the virus by carrying it on their clothing and shoes.
- Transmission by insect bites has also been recorded.



Part of rabbit's digestive system

Lungs

Stomach

Liver

Intestines



Incubation period

1-5 days



Death

This may occur within  
**12-36 hours**  
once clinical signs develop.



Should humans be concerned?

The virus is not zoonotic and  
**cannot spread**  
to humans or other animal species.



A vaccine is  
**now available**

for both RHDV1 and 2 in Singapore. Please check with vets for availability.



There are

**no specific treatments available,**

but it can be managed with supportive care.

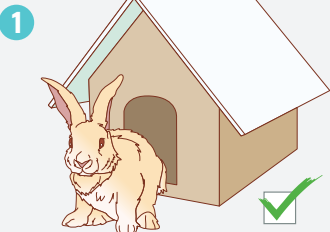


Surviving rabbits can continue

**shedding the virus for at least a month**

after they recover.

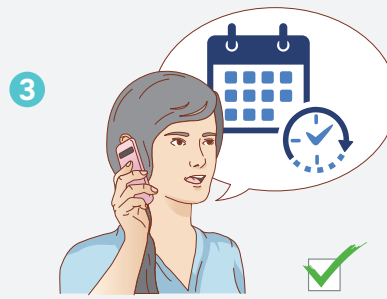
### PREVENTION



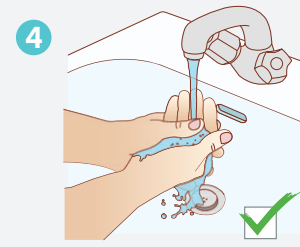
Rabbits should be kept at home as much as possible. Avoid addition of other rabbits into the household until all rabbits can be vaccinated.



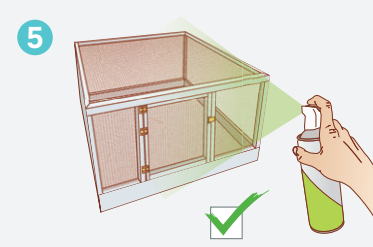
Avoid contact with other rabbits outside of the household. Owners should also avoid handling other rabbits.



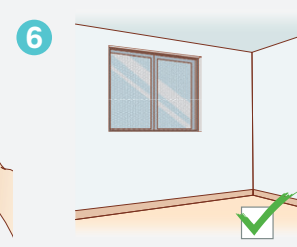
Defer non-urgent appointments with vets and groomers where possible. Notify your vet ahead if RHD is suspected before going down so that preparations can be made.



Owners should wash and disinfect their hands and clothes properly before handling their rabbits.



Keep the housing and living environments of the rabbits clean and sanitised.



Consider installing insect nets on windows as insect bites can also spread the disease.