

Myxomatosis Alert in San Gabriel, California

June 2010

We have been notified about three confirmed cases of Myxomatosis (Myxo) in San Gabriel, California. All three rabbits died.

What is Myxomatosis?

Myxo is a viral infection in rabbits caused by a member of the Poxvirus family. It is deadly to rabbits: the mortality rate has been reported at 99%. It is spread by vectors (mosquitoes and fleas) that have bitten an infected rabbit. Direct contact with an infected rabbit can also spread the disease.

The myxo virus was introduced into Australia in 1950 to reduce the population of wild rabbits. It got out of control and affected domestic rabbits and spread into other countries. Millions of rabbits have died from it. In the United States there have only been a few reported cases.

How is Myxo diagnosed?

Myxo is diagnosis by observing the symptoms and biopsies of the lesions. In many cases the diagnosis is made post-mortem, because of the sudden death.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include swelling of the ears, nose, mouth and genitals, conjunctivitis, not eating, lethargy, loss of appetite, fever and lesions.

What do I do if I suspect my rabbit has Myxo?

Call your rabbit vet straight away and quarantine your rabbit from all other rabbits

What is the treatment?

Currently there is no effective treatment for Myxo in the United States. Most rabbits die of hemorrhage and or seizures within 10 days. Pain medication and sub-q fluids will make a rabbit more comfortable.

There are vaccines in other countries, but the strains of Myxo can be different therefore a vaccine that works in one area may not in another. We are still looking into this for further information.

How do I protect my rabbits?

~Keep your rabbits indoors at all times.

~Make sure you have screens on all windows or doors that are left open.

~If you have cats or dogs keep them on flea control. It has been suggested to keep rabbits on Revolution to protect them from fleas, but it will not protect them from Myxo.

~Eliminate standing water (where mosquitoes might breed) in your yard.

~ Avoid going to pet shops, rabbit shows, county fairs and swap meets.

If we educate ourselves about Myxo and take precautions now, it could make a difference in preventing this horrible disease from spreading. Which in turn will save the lives of many rabbits.

Check out our website news for further updates.