

ANSWERS FROM USDA/APHIS as of September 29, 2018

Below is an answer from USDA/APHIS regarding the questions asked in the last few days, which I relayed to them. Please note--as questions arise, I am relaying them to the folks most likely to have the answers we need, so there are likely to be more posts like this as time goes on.  
--PA

Questions regarding US-Ohio outbreak of RHDV2, September 2018:

--How was this discovered--why did the owner have an animal tested?

The Ohio farm had a total of 5 rabbits. Three died and the fourth was taken to a veterinary clinic where it was died and samples were sent to FADDL.

--Did they lose animals previous to the tested one, and if so, how many?

Yes, three.

--We understand that no animals had been moved off the property, but had any been brought in, say, in the last six months?

To our knowledge, no animals had been brought in for the last two years or more.

--What symptoms were seen in the animals which keyed the owner to something different than the usual causes?

Over the course of approximately 3 weeks, 4 of the 5 rabbits became acutely ill. Each of the first 3 rabbits died within 12 hours of clinical onset of mild lethargy.

-- How many rabbits are on the property, and how many ill/died?

5 total domestic rabbits. 4 died. One remains under quarantine.

--To verify the virus and its strain, what tests/methods were used?

The initial test was performed at FADDL (Plum Island). The sample was positive on both ELISA and PCR. The whole genome sequencing indicated that the virus was very similar to the one detected in Canada.

-- Is there any sort of organized surveillance testing which might be available now or in the future to help test and screen all submitted rabbits which are necropsied in the US?

At this time, we do not anticipate performing widespread, active surveillance.

--What kind of quarantine and management strategy is being applied in this case?

--Have all rabbits on the property been destroyed?

No. There is one quarantined rabbit on the property.

--Is there consideration of something like ring vaccination to help keep the disease confined to that one property?

There are currently no licensed vaccines in the US for RHDV2.

--What is the status/population of feral domestic rabbits in the area of the affected facility?

APHIS WS and Ohio Department of Natural Resources are aware of the case and are assessing the local wild rabbit population.

--Are there restrictions being recommended to limit movement and exhibition of rabbits, particularly in consideration of the ARBA National Convention taking place in about 3 weeks?

For now, APHIS considers this to be an isolated case and, for that reason, there are no Federal interstate movement restrictions. Recommend to contact local State animal health officials for destination States to determine if there are State movement requirements/restrictions.

Donna Karlsons  
Public Affairs Specialist  
USDA/APHIS