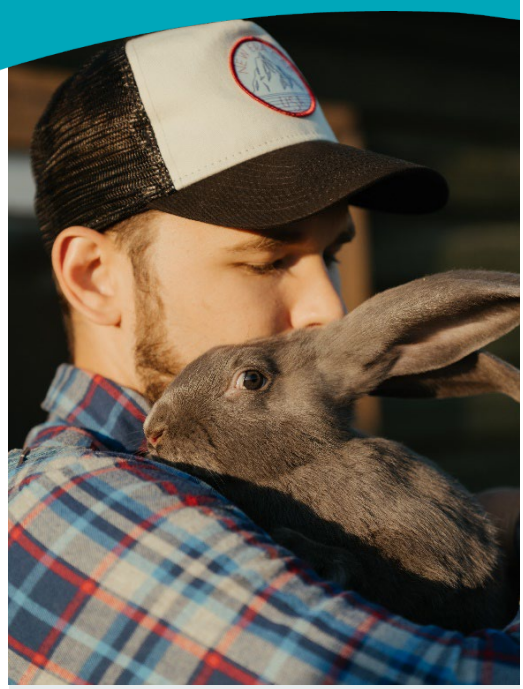
Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease

November 2026
Animal Health and Protection branch



Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV2) mortality events in neighbouring jurisdictions

In October 2026, snowshoe hare mortality events were identified in BC, Alberta, and NWT caused by Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV2). This virus was first identified in Canada in Nanaimo, BC in 2018 in domestic rabbits. RHDV2 can infect both domestic and wild rabbits and hares.

RDHV2 has not yet been detected in the Yukon.

What happens when RHDV2 infects an animal?

Once a rabbit or hare is infected with the virus, the disease is referred to as Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD).

- This disease poses no known risk to other mammals or humans, however, the RHDV2 virus is robust and can be carried from place to place by insects, predators, scavengers, people, clothing, and equipment. Freezing does not kill the virus and it can survive in the environment for months.
- Transmission between rabbits/hares happens rapidly, with RHDV2 spreading through saliva, nasal secretions, urine and feces. A rabbit or hare may inhale or ingest the virus. The virus can also spread through contact with contaminated environments, carcasses or animal parts.
- RHDV2 causes severe illness within 1 to 5 days of transmission. Symptoms can include listlessness, rapid breathing, depression, incoordination or sudden death. Multiple animals may be ill or die at the same time.
- In wild rabbit and hare populations, multiple hares may be found dead at one site. The virus could have significant impact on Yukon wildlife if it was introduced into the wild.

Can Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease be prevented?

There is no specific treatment although supportive care may help in cases of domestic rabbit infection. Infected rabbits that survive can shed the virus for weeks after recovery.

Biosecurity is the best tool to protect rabbits (and wild hares) from this virus and other infectious diseases. Everything that comes into a domestic rabbit operation – especially new animals, but also equipment, vehicles, and people should be controlled. It is useful to limit the number of people who come into your animal housing facilities

Contact

Animal Health and Protection branch
Government of Yukon
867-667-5600 or
1-800-661-0408, ext. 5600

10 Burns Road,
Whitehorse, Yukon

Email: animalhealth@yukon.ca

Animal Health and Protection branch

The Animal Health and Protection branch is responsible for health monitoring and diagnosis of disease in both wildlife and domestic animals.

The staff provide expertise in laboratory services and in veterinary medicine to support public and animal health.





It is important to consider the health status of rabbits you are buying, practice good biosecurity, and prevent contact between your rabbits and other domestic rabbits or wild snowshoe hares. New rabbits should be quarantined away from your existing stock for at least two to three weeks. You should always handle your clean herd before working with quarantined animals and follow disinfection procedures after handling those in quarantine.

Items coming out of a domestic rabbit operation (bedding, equipment, clothing) including carcasses of dead animals, should not be left on the land, as they pose potential infection hazard to wild hares. These items and carcasses should be appropriately disposed of at a landfill.

There is a vaccine available in Canada to help protect domestic rabbits against rabbit hemorrhagic virus. Consult a veterinarian to determine if your rabbit(s) need this vaccination. Even if your animals are vaccinated, good biosecurity is key to preventing illness.

How do I report a sick or dead rabbit?

Pet or livestock rabbits

Report any unexpected illness or death in pet or livestock rabbits to your veterinarian.

In certain cases, the Animal Health and Protection branch can assist veterinarians and livestock owners with diagnostic testing for RHDV2.

Wild snowshoe hares

As part of monitoring for RHDV2 in the Yukon, the Animal Health and Protection branch is interested in hearing about reports of sick or dead snowshoe hares, particularly if multiple hares are found dead in a small area.

Sick or dead showshoe hares should not be consumed or fed to pets or other animals. Do not use or keep the pelt.

Report dead showshoe hares to Animal Health and Protection by email animalhealth@yukon.ca or phone 867-667-5600.

If you choose to handle a carcass to submit it for testing, ensure you wear disposable gloves and use multiple bags to contain the carcass.

More information

If you own domestic rabbits, as pets or livestock, you can:

- contact the Animal Health and Protection branch or your veterinarian for more information on biosecurity, or
- download our Yukon farm biosecurity checklist or biosecurity fact sheet on Yukon.ca, or
- visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency webpage on CFIA Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease.