

# RHDV2 Guidance for Falconers

## IMPORTANT NOTICE: RABBIT HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus serotype 2 (RHDV-2) was confirmed in a domestic rabbit facility in Sanpete county on 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2020. It is likely that the disease has spilled over into the free-ranging rabbit population.

RHDV-2 is a highly pathogenic and contagious calicivirus of rabbits; it does not infect other animals or people and is **not related to the coronavirus responsible for COVID-19**.

First identified in domestic rabbits in Europe, we now know that RHDV-2 will infect native North American rabbits. Outbreaks in wild rabbits in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Texas since early March 2020 already have caused extensive losses of cottontail rabbits and jackrabbits in affected areas, perhaps numbering in the tens of thousands of mortalities.

This virus is very hardy and will remain infectious on the surfaces of objects, on clothing, and in tissues for a significant amount of time. It may be spread between rabbits by inhalation, contact with contaminated equipment, flies and other insects (mechanically), contact with urine or feces from infected rabbits, and contact with feces from predators that have eaten infected rabbits. There is no specific treatment and the disease is often fatal in native rabbits (potentially 75% to ~100%). Rabbits that don't die immediately may have a poor appetite, inactivity, fever, and a bloody nose.

We are asking for your assistance in looking for cases and increasing biosecurity. At this time, we do not know the extent or impact of this disease in Utah. We may issue further guidance related to rabbit hunting in the future.

### Recommendations for RHDV-2:

- Report any mortalities involving three or more cottontails or jackrabbits and any single mortalities seen in snowshoe hare or pika to your local Utah Division of Wildlife office.
- Clean and disinfect (1:10 solution of household bleach after cleaning) all surfaces and equipment that come into contact with rabbits; use disposable gowns or aprons, and gloves for handling rabbits.
- Do not touch rabbit or rodent carcasses.
- Do not allow pets to eat found carcasses.
- Do not move rabbits, their carcasses or feces
- Raptors may be able to move RHDV-2 after coming into contact with infected rabbit carcasses or parts. Please try to avoid contact between your birds and rabbit carcasses or parts.

For additional information:

<https://ag.utah.gov/farmers/animal-industry/animal-health-program/rabbit-hemorrhagic-disease/>  
[http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabbit\\_hemorrhagic\\_disease.pdf](http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabbit_hemorrhagic_disease.pdf)

[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf)