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Memo

To: Alberta rabbit owners

From: Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian

November 4, 2026

Subject: Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease in western Canada

Outbreaks of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) in snowshoe hares (*Lepus americanus*) have been reported in British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. Alberta Environment and Parks has informed the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian of deaths consistent with RHD in snowshoe hares across northern Alberta.

RHD is a fatal viral infection of rabbits. The first detection of RHD in Alberta was in 2021, affecting captive pet rabbits in Calgary and Taber. The virus has been detected occasionally since then, including outbreaks impacting feral rabbits in Calgary, Canmore and Edmonton in 2021-2022. Common signs of infection include fever, depression, inappetence, shortness of breath, frothy bloody nasal discharge, difficulty walking, paddling of the legs, seizures, and paralysis. In some cases, however, rabbits infected with the virus die without any other signs of disease. The infection has produced mortality rates approaching 90%.

RHD poses no known risk to humans. While there is no treatment, a vaccine is available; speak to your veterinarian about immunizing your rabbits. Enhanced biosecurity is recommended to help mitigate the risk posed to domestic rabbits by RHD.

Contact your veterinarian if you have questions about your rabbit's health. Additional questions about this notice may be directed to the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian by email at chief.prov.vet@gov.ab.ca or by telephone at 780-427-3448.

Additional resources:

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Rabbit haemorrhagic disease
- Government of Alberta, Environment and Protected Areas. Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (past notices)