

Protect your pet rabbits against calicivirus

Information for pet rabbit owners

19 July 2018

Results confirming rabbit calicivirus has impacted a small number of domestic rabbits are providing a timely reminder for pet owners to continue to take steps to minimise the risk of accidental infection.

A single domestic rabbit which died in Blenheim has tested positive for the new RHDV2 strain, while one outbreak of the original RHDV1 Czech strain was detected in samples from seven domestic rabbits in Canterbury. There have been no detected infections in domestic rabbits with the controlled calicivirus RHDV1 K5 release that was undertaken earlier in the year.

The May 2018 discovery of the new RHDV2 virus strain which has been found in a total of three wild rabbits in Marlborough and the Bay of Plenty confirmed the strain is established in New Zealand. It is unlikely that the new strain can be eradicated or contained now that it has been confirmed in wild rabbits on both the North and South Islands.

A new vaccine called Filavac is available throughASUREQuality and provides cover for not only RHDV2, but also the other current strains of rabbit calicivirus. The New Zealand Veterinary Association recommends that where Filavac is available, it should be used to protect against all three strains.

If you'd like to vaccinate your rabbit, check if your vet has the vaccine available.

There are also a number of practical steps you can take to minimise the risk to your pets. If you own rabbits, you should:

- Keep them separate from wild rabbits.
- Wash hands between handling rabbits.
- Control insects around pet rabbits as they can spread the virus between rabbits.
- Avoid cutting grass and feeding it to pet rabbits.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect cages and equipment.

MPI's website has the most up to date information: <http://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/long-term-pest-management/wild-rabbits/pet-rabbits-and-caliciviruses/>

Talk to your vet for further information on protecting your rabbit and also check our advice on our website.

Questions on the calicivirus RHDV2 response	MPI's general enquiries line: 0800 00 83 33 info@mpi.govt.nz
MPI Pest and Disease Hotline	0800 80 99 66