BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Agriculture and Food

# Disease Alert

**Disease:** Rabbit haemorrhagic disease

**Species Affected:** Pet rabbit (1)

**Location:** Burnaby, BC

**Date:** October, 2026

**Description:** Samples from a single pet rabbit that showed signs compatible with rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) and passed away in late October were submitted to the Animal Health Center for testing and were confirmed positive for RHD. The rabbit was resident in Burnaby, but had travelled to other locations in the lower mainland and out of province. No other cases have been reported since that time.

**Disease information:**

RHD is a sudden onset, highly contagious and fatal viral disease of rabbits and hares. Captive and feral European rabbits are most commonly affected, but native wild rabbits can also contract the disease. There is no known risk to human health.

Rabbits usually become sick within 1 to 5 days of being infected. Death is common after a short period of illness that can include fever, depression, loss of appetite, shortness of breath, neurological signs (e.g., difficulty walking, seizures, paralysis, etc.), and bleeding from the nose. Death may also occur suddenly without signs. There is no treatment for the disease. RHD is spread between rabbits through saliva, nasal secretions, urine, and feces. It can also be spread by people who handle sick rabbits and by contaminated objects.

Cases occur sporadically in BC in both domestic and feral rabbits.

**Recommendations:**

- The best way to protect domestic rabbits from infection is through good biosecurity.
- Rabbit owners should report any suspicious deaths to their veterinarian and specimens can be submitted to the Animal Health Centre for diagnosis.
- In July 2022, the Canadian Centre for Veterinary Biologics (CCVB) licensed an RHD vaccine produced by the French company Filavie. Filavie has designated Ceva Animal Health as their Canadian distributor and veterinarian enquiries may be directed to Ceva's customer service at service.canada@ceva.com.

**Resources:** Rabbit haemorrhagic disease