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SDHS Urges Pet Owners To Protect Rabbits Against Dangerous Disease

Deadly and contagious Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Type 2 is spreading rapidly in SoCal.

San Diego – San Diego Humane Society’s veterinary team is urging owners of pet rabbits to have them vaccinated against Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Type 2, a contagious and fatal disease for rabbits. Because RHDV2 is extremely contagious and spreading fast in Southern California, San Diego Humane Society is also asking for the public’s help in quarantining rabbits who do not require immediate medical attention for 18 days, if at all possible, before bringing them to SDHS or rehome the rabbit on their own. Rabbits who have been vaccinated one week to one year against RHDV2 before admission into the shelter do not need to be quarantined. Rabbits should be kept indoors and separate from other rabbits who may go outdoors or be exposed to wildlife, as well as separate from rabbits who do not live in the home.



According to the [California Department of Food and Agriculture](#), RHDV2 has been confirmed in domestic rabbits at 49 backyard properties in Southern California since July 2020. To date, six counties, including San Diego County, have detected the disease in wild cottontail rabbits and/or jackrabbits.

San Diego Humane Society has implemented comprehensive protocols for handling domestic and wild rabbits, which include strict biosecurity measures to reduce the spread of the disease. “Unfortunately, this disease is getting worse here locally and spreading around the country,” said San Diego Humane Society VP of Shelter Medicine and Chief Medical Officer Zarah Hedge, DVM. “Our rabbit intake numbers at San Diego Humane Society are increasing and we are running out of proper housing to quarantine the rabbits. We are asking the public to help curb this disease before it gets any worse.”

At this time, San Diego Humane Society’s Ramona Wildlife Center is not admitting rabbits from the Ramona area. To prevent the possibility of the spread of RHDV2 to the rest of the population, *all* wild rabbits admitted to the Ramona Wildlife Center must be humanely euthanized. Rabbits admitted to the Pilar & Chuck Bahde Wildlife Center in San Diego who are not from Ramona will be quarantined according to the current protocol. None of San Diego Humane Society’s campuses are admitting pet rabbits from outside San Diego County.

San Diego Humane Society & San Diego House Rabbit Society are offering two rabbit vaccine clinics for the public on June 12 and June 19, 2021:

San Diego Humane Society’s San Diego Campus, 5500 Gaines St., San Diego, 92110
9 – 11 a.m.

\$40 per rabbit (includes a free microchip if the rabbit is not already chipped).

Registration is available online by clicking [here](#) or via sdhumane.org/vaccinations.

In addition to vaccinating, here are additional tips for pet owners to protect their rabbits:

- Keep your rabbit indoors.
- Do not let your rabbit come into physical contact with other rabbits from outside your home.
- Wash your hands before and after handling your rabbit.
- Change your clothes if you come in contact with other rabbits.
- Disinfect shoes and other objects that may be contaminated.
- Know your hay and feed sources. Only purchase from a trusted manufacturer.
- Do not feed rabbits foraged plants, grasses or tree branches.
- Install window and door screens to prevent mosquitos and flies inside.
- Quarantine any new rabbit in the home for at least 18 days.
- Use safe monthly flea treatments (as prescribed by your veterinarian only) for rabbits, cats and dogs.
- Contact your veterinarian if your rabbit becomes sick.

RHDV2 is not related to coronavirus, and it does not affect humans or domestic animals other than rabbits. It is highly contagious — transmitted via direct contact with infected rabbits and indirectly via animate and inanimate objects that come in contact with the virus. RHDV2 can also live in the environment for prolonged periods of time and can be transmitted from



humans to rabbits via contaminated clothing, shoes or other items. Clinical signs include fever, lethargy, anorexia, neurologic deficits, abnormal vocalizations and sudden death. Some rabbits can appear healthy and develop clinical signs acutely. Young rabbits four to eight weeks of age can be asymptomatic.

To schedule an interview with a veterinarian about how to keep rabbits safe, contact Nina Thompson at 619-372-0916 or at nthompson@sdhumane.org.

B-roll/photos of rabbits in care at SDHS for media use can be downloaded here: <https://bit.ly/3v77e8Z>

Suggested Tweet: @sdhumane's veterinary team is urging owners of pet rabbits to have them vaccinated against Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Type 2, a contagious and fatal disease for rabbits that's spreading fast in SoCal. Learn more at sdhumane.org/rhdv2.

About San Diego Humane Society

San Diego Humane Society's scope of social responsibility goes beyond adopting animals. We offer programs that strengthen the human-animal bond, prevent cruelty and neglect, provide medical care, educate the community and serve as a safety net for all pet families. Serving San Diego County since 1880, San Diego Humane Society has campuses in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside, Ramona and San Diego. For more information, please visit sdhumane.org.

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