



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**The Department of Livestock Asks Montanans to  
be Aware of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease**

**Helena, Mont.** – The Department of Livestock (DOL) is asking Montanans to be aware that a highly contagious and fatal viral disease of rabbits has been identified in multiple states. Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD) has been diagnosed in New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, California, Utah, Nevada, Washington, and New York. Montana does not have any RHD cases at this time.

Infected rabbits may present with varying clinical signs including fever, dullness, lack of appetite, wasting, diarrhea, neurologic signs, respiratory signs with bloody discharge from the nose or mouth, and sudden death. Both domestic and wild rabbits are affected by RHD. The virus does not affect humans or other domestic animals.

“In addition to a high fatality rate, there is no treatment for RHD or licensed vaccine available in the United States, which makes disease control challenging,” said Dr. Tahnee Szymanski, Assistant State Veterinarian. “This is why we are asking Montanans to be vigilant and to take the necessary precautions to prevent the introduction of RHD into our state.”

RHD is spread by direct contact with live or dead rabbits, or indirectly through contaminated objects. The virus can also be transmitted from a person with contaminated hands, scavengers, or insects, and can remain infectious in carcasses or the environment for weeks. Individuals who own or work around rabbits should practice good biosecurity to prevent transmitting disease. This includes thoroughly washing hands, cleaning clothing and footwear, and avoiding contact with wild rabbits. Rabbit owners are also asked to be aware of the import requirements when moving animals into Montana. All rabbits require a certificate of veterinary inspection and an import permit number which can be obtained by calling (406) 444-2976.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease is a reportable disease in Montana. DOL and Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) encourage Montanans to report any mortality events in domestic or wild rabbits. If you have questions or if you would like to report a mortality event, please contact the DOL at (406) 444-2976. If you would like to report the mortality of a wild rabbit, please contact the FWP office at (406) 577-7880. For more information, please visit [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf).

The mission of the Montana Department of Livestock is to control and eradicate animal diseases, prevent the transmission of animal diseases to humans, and to protect the livestock industry from theft and predatory animals. For more information on the Montana Department of Livestock, visit [www.liv.mt.gov](http://www.liv.mt.gov).