

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has confirmed a case of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2) in a domestic rabbit in Montgomery County earlier this month. This is the second occurrence of RHDV2 in New York. The first cluster of cases was in New York City in March 2020.

RHDV2, a calicivirus, is a highly contagious and fatal disease of domestic and wild rabbits. **It does not affect humans or other animals.** Signs may include fever, lethargy, hemorrhage, seizures, and sudden death. Rabbits typically show signs 1 – 3 days after being infected. The virus is very hardy and can survive in the environment for weeks or longer if conditions are right and it can be spread rapidly through feed, bedding, equipment, and other contaminated materials such as shoes and clothing. Domestic rabbits who do not go outside, or come in contact with other rabbits, are still at risk of contracting this virus.

A new vaccine for RHDV2 has been granted emergency use authorization by the USDA. The vaccine, produced by Medgene Labs, is approved for sale to licensed veterinarians in New York. Administration of the vaccine is through a subcutaneous injection and requires a 2-dose regimen, with the second dose given 21 days following the initial dose.

The Veterinary Center for Birds & Exotics has limited doses of the vaccine, and we are currently taking appointments for our patients to be vaccinated. Appointments for this vaccine are limited, so if you are interested in getting your rabbit vaccinated, please call us at your earliest convenience.