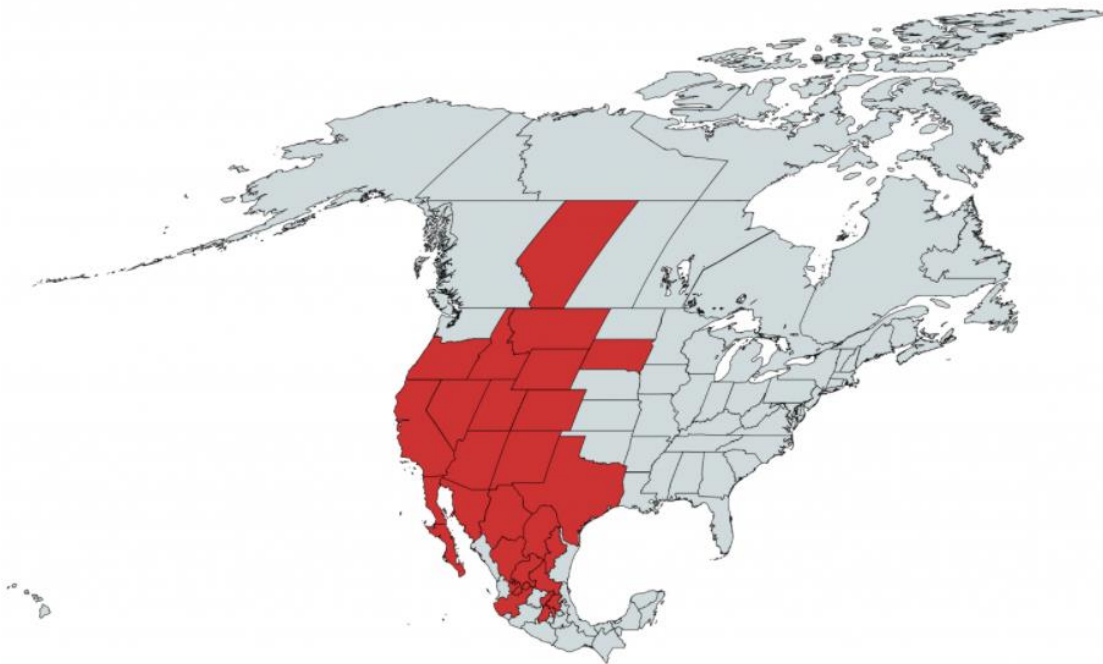


Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus Spreads to Northern California

July 7, 2021

Friday, June 25, 2021, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife's [Wildlife Health Laboratory](#) confirmed a wild black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) salvaged near Pleasanton, Alameda County tested positive for Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus serotype-2 (RHDV2), indicating a significant expansion of the RHDV2 range into Northern California. This extremely contagious and persistent lagomorph virus has been spreading rapidly throughout North America since first being detected in wild rabbits in New Mexico in April 2020.



States and Provinces with documented RHDV2 outbreaks in wild or domestic rabbit populations circa June 2021. Source: House Rabbit Society (rabbit.org).

RHDV2 is highly contagious and lethal to both wild and domestic lagomorphs (rabbits, hares and pikas). RHDV2 only affects lagomorph species – it is not known to affect humans, livestock or pets other than rabbits. The virus is transmitted between rabbits through contact with other infected rabbits or carcasses, their meat or their fur, contaminated food or water, or materials coming into contact with them. People can also inadvertently spread the virus to new areas through footwear and other materials that have come into contact with infected soil, feces, or carcasses. RHDV2 has the potential to significantly depress wild lagomorph populations and may pose an extinction threat to rare species and species with limited distributions such as the endangered [riparian brush rabbit](#) (*Sylvilagus bachmani riparius*).



Endangered riparian brush rabbit. Moose Peterson photo.

In late summer 2020, an interagency conservation team including partners from the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Oakland Zoo, River Partners, and the California State University Stanislaus Endangered Species Recovery Program implemented an emergency vaccination campaign on the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge to protect endangered riparian brush rabbits from RHDV2. Nearly 500 wild riparian brush rabbits have been vaccinated since the campaign began and additional vaccination efforts are planned for fall 2021 with the goal of maintaining a vaccinated core of 200-300 riparian brush rabbits on the Refuge.

In California, the virus is now documented in the wild in Alameda, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. All Californians can help limit and slow the spread of RHDV2 by sanitizing footwear and vehicle tires when leaving RHDV2 outbreak areas and by reporting sightings of multiple dead lagomorphs through [CDFW's Mortality Reporting Website](#). Domestic rabbit owners can help prevent the spread of RHDV2 to wild rabbits by keeping rabbits indoors, suspending travel with rabbits, suspending long distance rabbit sales and trades, sanitizing clothing and equipment before heading outdoors, and properly disposing of bedding and waste.

Additional Resources

[RHDV2 FAQs, Including Sanitary Protocols \(CDFW\)](#)

[USDA RHDV2 Disinfection Guidance for Commercial Rabbitries](#)

[RHDV2 Impacted U.S. Counties Map](#)