



## Rabbit Calicivirus

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), also known as Calicivirus, typically causes a rapidly fatal disease in rabbits. There are two strains of RHDV present in Australia – RHDV1 and RHDV2. The RHDV1 strain of RHDV was released in Australia in 1996 to control wild rabbits. RHDV2 is a new strain of the virus that was first reported in Australia in 2015. It was not released in Australia by any government department and it is not known how the virus entered the country.

The virus is easily spread by direct contact between rabbits and anything contaminated with the virus (eg infected rabbit, hay, bedding, grass, unwashed hands, flies, birds, rodents etc), and it can survive a long time in the environment.

### **Protecting Pet Rabbits - Things You Should Know**

In Australia historically there has only been one vaccine available to protect rabbits against RHDV – Cylap, which provides good protection to RHDV1, however only limited protection against the “wild” type of virus (RHDV2). This vaccination was usually given every six months, on recommendation from specialists, to try and provide good cross-protection to rabbits against RHDV-2. It comes in a multiple-use vial, which meant that it was necessary to have scheduled rabbit vaccination days, to give the “freshest” dose of vaccination possible.

However, recently the Australian government has approved an emergency permit for Filavac VHD K C + V, which is a vaccination that covers for both RHDV1 and RHDV2 in rabbits. It is registered to be

used from 10 weeks old, and is an annual vaccination, rather than twice per year. It comes in a single use vaccine vial, similar to a dog or cat vaccination, which means that it can be done at any time.