



(03)8790 2425

***Inside this issue:***

Calicivirus	2
Calicivirus continued	3
Vaccinations	4
Fleas	5
Up coming events	6

Our core values:

- The well-being of you and your pets
- To provide high quality medicine and surgery
- Honest and reliable vet care
- Continually updating our knowledge and services
- Striving to build a long term partnership with you and your pets

**Our facilities and services include:**

- Routine veterinary consultations, vaccinations and microchipping.
- Small Animal surgical facilities; elective & orthopedics.
- In-house diagnostics; pathology, ultrasonography, digital radiology.
- Quarantine
- Pet food and other pet supplies

## Welcome to Ultimate Vet Clinics AUTUMN edition newsletter

We are very excited to say that each season we will be able to email you all the latest clinic news, special offers, upcoming events, and any clinic promotions and discounts.

242 Narre Warren – Cranbourne Road Narre Warren South Vic 3805  
**p: 03 8790 2425 f: 03 8790 3856**

e: [info@ultimatevet.com.au](mailto:info@ultimatevet.com.au)

Ultimate Veterinary Clinic Pty Ltd ABN: 82116442472

Ultimate Vet welcomes any suggestions or ideas of things you would like to see in our newsletters. If you have anything to share, drop us a line at [info@ultimatevet.com.au](mailto:info@ultimatevet.com.au) and we'll see what we can do for you.

We appreciate your feedback



There are a number of RHDV strains present in Australia;

- RHDV 1 - Original virus released in 1995
- RHDVIA - Variant of type 1 isolated in Sydney in 2014
- RHDVI - K5 Variant (release planned in March 2017)
- RHDV 2 - First recorded in mid 2015 in Australia, 2010 in Europe
- RCV - AI Non pathogenic virus present in wild population

There has been some confusion between the new variant of RHDVI (K5) and the discovery in 2015 of RHDV2 in wild and pet rabbits in the ACT and subsequently NSW, Victoria, SA, NT, Tasmania and WA. This new virus is called RHDV2, but is a different virus to RHDVI and K5.

The pathogenic strains of the virus (RHDVI, RHDVI K5 variant and RHDV2) are considered contagious and can be transmitted via; direct contact with infected rabbits, fomites, transmission via equipment and clothing, transmission by vectors including flies. Use of a parvovirus type cleaning protocol is recommended after suspicious cases.

## Latest news

### 30 January 2017: Korean strain (K5) of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV)

During the first week of March 2017, a planned national release of RHDVI **K5**, will go ahead.

In April 2016, RHDVI **K5** was approved as a Restricted Chemical Product by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine Authority (APVMA).

RHDVI **K5** is a variant of the (RHDVI) virus released in 1996. Based on scientific evidence to date, the existing RHDVI vaccine (known as Cylap®) is effective against RHDVI **K5**. This evidence is based on a small pilot study undertaken by NSW Department of Primary Industries.

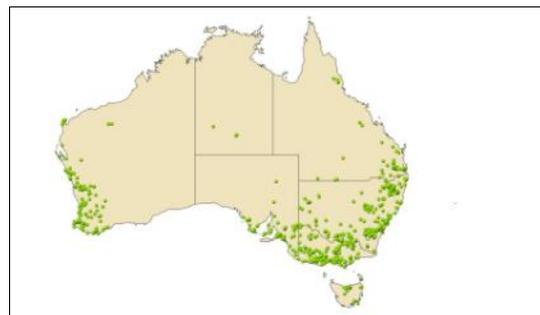
***It is recommended that all domestic rabbit owners be reminded to vaccinate their rabbits prior to the release of RHDVI K5 and/or ensure their animals' vaccinations are up-to-date.***

The Department of Primary Industries recommend that rabbit owners take the following extra precautions:

- Prevent direct and indirect contact between domestic and wild rabbits.
- Avoid cutting grass and feeding it to rabbits if there is the risk of contamination from wild rabbits.
- Wash hands, with warm soapy water between handling rabbits.
- Good insect control is also important and will help reduce the risks of introduction of both RHDV and myxomatosis. Insect control could include insect proofing the hutch or keeping the rabbits indoors.
- Infected rabbits should be isolated and disposed of in a manner that will minimise environmental contamination.
- All cages and equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Disinfectants that can be used to decontaminate any equipment include 10 % bleach, 10 % sodium hydroxide, or parvocide disinfectants. If using disinfectants material safety data sheets must be available and consulted, prior to use. Autoclaving will also kill the virus.

RHDVI K5 is not a new virus; it is a Korean variant of the existing (Czech) virus already widespread in Australia.

RHDVI K5 will be released across more than 600 sites within Australia and is being coordinated through the State and Territory Governments (see Table 1 for contacts).





## RHDV2

RHDV2 does not pose a risk to human health and is not a notifiable livestock disease. However, the impact on pet rabbits and rabbit farms is high and it can cause death in young kittens (3-4 weeks) and a proportion of vaccinated adults. This new virus strain is distinct from RHD

V1, which was released in Australia in 1996 for the control of wild rabbits. It affects rabbits and hares only.

RHDV2 was first reported in France in 2010 and has been found in several other European countries. It was first detected in Australia in the Canberra area in May 2015.

Clinical signs of RHDV2 differ from the type 1 virus. RHDV2 affects kittens at a younger age (from 3-4 weeks) and clinical signs may be over 3-5 days before death. This is significant in general practice where unwell rabbits may present for vague clinical signs including; lethargy, inappetence, pyrexia and gut stasis. These rabbits will be infectious to other rabbits.

Clinical signs can include;

- pyrexia
- seizures
- hypoglycaemia
- anaemia
- significant increases in liver and kidney enzymes
- death



The current vaccine for rabbit calicivirus (Cylap RCD) is not fully protective against RHDV2. However, there is evidence of some cross protection between type 1 and type 2 viruses. Keeping domestic or pet rabbits' vaccinations up to date is recommended to provide the maximum possible protection against this new strain. While an updated vaccine has been developed in Europe it is not currently available in Australia.

Until a specific vaccine is available for RHDV2, a revised vaccination protocol using the vaccine currently available in Australia has been suggested, though it is not known to what extent this will confer protection.

*Current Vaccination recommendations follow and will be regularly updated.*

## Current Vaccination Recommendations

The AVA recommends that for best protection against the current virus about to be released (RHDV1-K5), previously released variants (RHDV1, RHDV1A) and the variant that emerged in parts of Australia in 2015 called RHDV2, the following protocols should be followed in consultation with your local veterinarian.

Kittens: 4, 8, 12 weeks of age, then every 6 months.

Adults: 2 vaccinations 1 month apart, then every 6 months.

**This protocol is off-label. Cylap is not registered for use against RHDV2 or for 6 monthly use.**

Based on studies conducted so far, giving the vaccine at more frequent intervals does not have negative health effects. Veterinarians need to advise owners that this protocol is off label.

Vaccination should always be administered to healthy animals, and a risk/benefit discussion with an owner is strongly recommended before vaccination of animals with chronic illness. Young animals are anecdotally more likely to show post-vaccination lethargy and inappetence. It is common to get a local reaction to the vaccine, especially if vaccination is not performed with a new needle, or if the vaccine is inadvertently given intradermally.

Note that any benefit of earlier and more frequent vaccination of kittens has to be balanced against the increased likelihood of any adverse event from the vaccine. The suggested off-label regime has not yet been validated in terms of increased protection or risk of adverse events, and feedback from veterinarians would be most welcome while we work to determine the most appropriate way to handle this situation.

Owners of pet rabbits and breeding stock are urged to implement strict biosecurity measures to protect their animals from infection, and talk to their vets about how best to achieve this.



**Did you know cats can get FELINE AIDS.**

**Feline Aids is caused by a virus called Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) which causes a deficiency of the immune system. Most cats affected by the virus won't show any symptoms but are more prone to developing other infectious conditions. For your cat to be infected they must have contact with another infected cat, this occurs commonly for cats that spend time outside. Usually being spread through cat scratches and bites. Don't worry, you can't get aids from your cat!**

**Fortunately, we have a vaccination against FIV which we recommend for all cats that spend time outside. This can be done when your cat gets their regular yearly vaccine. You should ask your Vet when you come for a vaccination if your cat should be vaccinated against FIV too. We also have a quick blood test which can be used to test for FIV in your cat. If you are worried one of our Vets can perform this test for your cat.**

**Did you know your RABBIT should be vaccinated against CALICIVIRUS?**

**Rabbits can be infected with a virus called Calicivirus which causes bleeding and death. First signs of disease in an infected rabbit is lethargy, diarrhoea and loss of interest in food. The virus is spread between rabbits but can also be spread where an infected rabbit has contact with an object which then has contact with your rabbit, such as grass, clothing and insects.**

**This month, the Australian government released a new strain of the virus to control the wild rabbit population, however, this also puts your rabbit at risk. We recommend that you come to the clinic and have your rabbit vaccinated against the virus. **Other prevention methods you can use include:****

- Keeping your rabbit indoors or ensure their outside enclosure doesn't allow contact with wild rabbits**
- Preventing insects from having contact with your rabbit, such as adding a fly screen around your hutch**
- Good hygiene, regularly cleaning the cage and your hands between handling rabbits**
- Avoid feeding cut grass to your rabbit as it may have contacted an infected wild rabbits**

**Remember, that prevention is always far easier than treatment. Ensure to have all you pets (cats, dogs and rabbits!) vaccinated**



## **Eliminating the dreaded fleas!!!**

Flea outbreaks tend to occur in the heat of summer and late autumn/early winter when people turn on their home heating systems. When it comes to eliminating fleas from your pet, there are a few key things to consider. First you need to be able to identify that your pet has fleas and secondly it is very important to understand and be familiar with the life cycle of the flea when you are trying to eradicate their presence completely.

### **HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PET HAS FLEAS?**

Three things to look for:

- 1: The adult fleas themselves. Part the hair near the rump and search for small black insects. They are fairly obvious.
- 2: Flea dirt. Flea faeces looks like tiny black specs that are actually curled on closer examination. You can wet these specs on a white piece of paper with water and they should dissolve and turn red.
- 3: Excessive scratching that is unusual for your pet. Allergic pets may only require one flea bite to start scratching excessively. If you pet is actually allergic to fleas you may never see the flea, just excessive scratching.

### **THE FLEA LIFE CYCLE**

There are 4 stages in the life cycle of the flea: egg, larva, pupa and adult.

Depending on the environmental temperature and humidity levels, the total life cycle can take anywhere from a couple of weeks to many months to be completed.

**FLEA EGGS:** The female flea lays eggs after a blood meal from the host (your pet). Blood is necessary for the adult flea to reproduce. These eggs are very small and layed in the pets fur. These eggs fall off your pet as they move around, allowing them to be dispersed throughout the environment where your pet spends all its time. Eggs represent about 50% of the entire flea population present in the home. Eggs can stay dormant in the environment for a long time and will only hatch when the environmental conditions are just right. Eggs hatch faster in warm and humid environments. Larvae then emerge as the next life stage.

**FLEA LARVAE:** Flea larvae generally make up about 35% of the entire flea population in the home. The larvae are blind and avoid being in the light. They feed on organic debris in the environment as well as pre-digested blood that the adult fleas pass. If conditions are favourable they spin their cocoon and move onto the next life stage (Pupae) in 5-20 days.

**FLEA PUPAE:** Flea pupae generally account for 10 % of the total flea population in the home. This is the last developmental stage before the adult flea emerges. The cocoon protects the pupae for several days to weeks before the adult flea emerges in favourable conditions but can protect the adult flea for several months if conditions are unfavourable. The cocoon has a sticky outer surface, which allows it to hide deep in the carpeting and not be removed by light vacuuming or sweeping. It also protects the adult flea from any chemicals. The adult flea will not emerge until the presence of a potential host is made obvious by vibrations from walking, increased carbon dioxide levels from breathing and the presence of body heat.

**ADULT FLEAS:** Once the adult flea emerges from the cocoon it will need to start feeding on a host within a few hours. The female flea cannot lay eggs until she obtains a blood meal. Shortly after a blood meal the adult fleas will mate and the female can start laying eggs within a few days. Adult fleas account for less than 5% of the entire flea population in the home. They spend most of their time on the host while they feed, breed and lay eggs.

### **ELIMINATING FLEAS:**

The best way of eliminating fleas is prevention! We want to prevent any adult flea that jumps onto your pet from being able to mate and lay any eggs to cause an environmental problem. Using flea products with a residual effect so that any adult flea, which jumps onto your pet and has a blood meal, dies before she can lay her eggs does this. The products we recommend are oral Nexguard monthly or Advantage top spot monthly. All pets in the household will need to be treated. If you already have a flea infestation in the home it is important to vacuum the environment regularly and wash all your pets bedding and toys in hot soapy water to eliminate as may of the eggs, larvae and pupae as possible from the environment. The house can also be cautiously treated with sprays and foggers.

- Unfortunately there is no quick fix to a flea environmental problem because of the duration and fluctuating time of the flea life cycle. The key is regular, good quality flea treatment application to prevent further eggs being laid while you treat the environmental problem. Fleas can be difficult to eliminate but if you are vigilant and use the correct chemicals in a safe and effective manner you will be victorious.