

RELEASING THE RABBIT VIRUS ON YOUR PROPERTY

SO YOU'RE INTERESTED IN RELEASING THE RABBIT VIRUS ON YOUR PROPERTY?

Release of the K5 rabbit virus is one method of controlling the impacts of rabbits. Sometimes it may be possible to get a vial of the virus through South Coast NRM or your local community group. However, if there isn't any virus available, here's the steps you can go through to get the virus and release it on your property.

STEP 1: BECOME AN AUTHORISED PERSON

You need to become an authorised person to obtain the virus.

The supply and use of RHDV1 K5 in WA to authorised users was enabled under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Regulations Amendment 2017 (Government Gazette Friday, 3 February 2017). Under the regulations, anyone who will be handling and mixing the liquid suspension virus must complete on-line training to become authorised users of RHDV. Authorisation training is to protect the virus and its effectiveness as it is completely safe to handle.

RHDV1-K5 Authorisation Training is available from DAFWA's Client Online Training website. You can access the training here: <https://regtraining.dpird.wa.gov.au/externaluser/login/index.php>

STEP 2: ORDER THE VIRUS

The virus is only available in freeze-dried form from NSW Department of Primary Industries Virology Laboratory. The RHDV1 Czech v351 strain is also available. To order either of these products, please contact EMAIL: virology.enquiries@dpi.nsw.gov.au or (02) 4640 6337.

The virus is largely shipped by road, so it is important to choose a coolish weather window for delivery. The virus is well packed and insulated, but it wouldn't survive large periods of time unrefrigerated. To remain effective the virus must be stored between 4 and 8°C. DO NOT freeze the virus as it will kill it.

As at 19 February 2020 the virus costs around \$120 per vial and shipping around \$50. Shipping is flat rate, so you may wish to consider coordinating an order with your neighbours. The number of vials you need depends on the amount of area you want to treat. One vial will be enough to dose up to 10 kg of carrots or up to 5 kg of oats. Typically, you need between 2 – 5 kgs of oats per kilometre of trail and between 5 and 10 kg of carrots per kilometre of trail. We've had more effective results using carrots in the areas where we have released the virus.



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STEP 3: LET YOUR NEIGHBOURS KNOW

Although the virus does not have any impact on species other than rabbits, it would pay to let your neighbours know what you are doing. If any neighbours have pet rabbits they can have them vaccinated by a vet against the K5 strain. It takes approximately 2 weeks for the vaccination to protect the animal. The RSPCA have a good section on their website on how to protect pets against the RDHV (<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-rabbit-calicivirus-and-how-do-i-protect-my-rabbit-from-rabbit-haemorrhagic-disease/>).

STEP 4: PRE-FEEDING

It is important that you run a few nights (minimum of 2) of pre feeding to lure as many rabbits into the area as possible.

If you're feeding with oats, consider the source to ensure that they're weed seed free.

STEP 5: RELEASE THE VIRUS

Rabbits need to be 12 weeks or older (approximately 2/3 the size of an average adult) for the virus to be most effective. It will also help spread the virus if there is a large number of flies and mosquitos around, as this will move the virus further afield from the release site. It is important to note that if there is a large amount of feed around, rabbits may choose not to eat the treated oats or carrots.

Mix the virus with your chosen feed type (carrots or oats) and lay treated material in the evening as soon as possible after preparation. The best times of the year for release are in autumn and spring.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

European Rabbit - <https://agric.wa.gov.au/n/2231>

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