

URGENT MESSAGE

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you the details and new protocols we have established to counteract and prevent the contamination and spread of two alarming diseases affecting species we care for at ECCHA.

The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is making its way through the states as migratory birds return for the spring. HPAI is most commonly found among water birds and waterfowl but has spread into our raptor and avian scavenger populations. It is highly contagious amongst birds, it has not been identified in the human population so there is no need to panic, and is often deadly within a few days' time in raptors.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) is a fatal, highly contagious disease affecting both wild and domestic rabbits. Infected rabbits may develop signs of fever, be hesitant to eat, show respiratory or nervous signs, or most common sudden death. It is important to note that, again, RHDV does not affect human health.

Both wild and pet rabbits are infected with RHDV through either direct contact or exposure to an infected rabbit's excretions or blood. The virus can also spread via insects, food, water, bedding, carcasses, or indirectly by people. Biosecurity and vaccination are the only way to protect rabbits.

Intake

We are accepting intake of rabbits on a case-by-case basis depending on how a rabbit is found or how it was housed. All rabbits will be quarantined at intake and observed for symptoms of RHDV per veterinary recommendations.

We **will NOT** be able to assist or admit any waterfowl, raptors, or migratory birds determined to have neurological symptoms without an explicit cause from trauma. Any birds seen to be "swimming" or walking in circles, holding its head in any abnormal position, not just drooping, but off to the side or straight back with the beak pointing to the sky or moving its head in a "jerky" motion needs to be reported to the DNR. We can also provide contact information for our local wildlife rehabilitees to assist you if a bird is found in this condition.

Fostering

Rabbits are to be fostered only in homes that are rabbit-free and where indoor/outdoor pets of any kind cannot encounter the rabbits. Fosters are to dispose of any non-washable items, including food, from previous foster animals and bleach everything else according to USDA cleaning instructions.

Adoption

Once we are able to house the vaccine, all of our adoptable rabbits will be vaccinated for RHDV2 until further notice.

Events

No rabbits will be allowed at any events that will have the potential to be in contact with any other rabbits. No rabbits will attend any outdoor events.

Donations

Due to the dangers of these virus, we are unable to accept any used donations related to birds or rabbits until further notice. If you want to donate supplies, please check out our Amazon wish list, Chewy wish list, or weekly Facebook wish list post. You can purchase items from one of our wish lists and it will be mailed directly to us.

We are taking the necessary precautions very seriously and will not be making any exceptions to the protocol so please, for the safety of our adoptable pets **do not bring any animals onto the property without an established drop off time**. We also ask that you be as honest as possible with what you are observing, all of our permanent residents are at risk and if they do contract the virus they will most likely succumb to it within a few days of exposure.

Resources:

Sharon Fandel (Conservation ecologist) is to be contacted for non-game species and Eric Kilburg (Wildlife Biologist) should be contacted for game species at 608-267-0866.

<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/nwhc/science/distribution-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-north-america-20212022>

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-rhdv2.pdf

https://medgenelabs.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Frequently-Asked-Questions_RHDV2_1121.pdf