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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indiana Grants Access to New Vaccine for Rabbits

(7 October 2021)—Beginning October 6, 2021, Indiana rabbit owners will be able to purchase vaccine to prevent infection by rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus Type 2 (RHDV2). The Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) has authorized the use of a newly available vaccine produced by Medgene Labs. The product is the only one approved by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for wide use in the United States.

The RHD virus is very contagious in rabbits and has a high mortality rate. The disease, which was not found in the United State until 2018, has spread through 16 states, in both wild and domestic species. Multiple strains of the RHD virus exist, with RHDV Type 1 and RHDV Type 2 being of greatest concern. RHD does **not impact human health** and is not known to affect other animals. **The disease has not been diagnosed in Indiana.**

Obtaining Vaccine

Under BOAH's authorization, the vaccination, which protects only against RHDV2 form of the virus, may be administered by a veterinarian or the rabbit owner. To obtain the vaccine, rabbit owners may be most successful procuring the product through a veterinarian. Medgene Labs has indicated that because of vial sizes distribution will be to veterinary clinics first; however, Hoosier rabbit owners may purchase from retail distributors and directly from the company as availability allows. (Other vaccine products currently licensed in the European Union require a special USDA permit to import.)

The vaccine (which is inactivated or killed product) is given subcutaneously in two doses, 21 days apart. Owners should allow 14 days after the second dose for full immunity to develop.

Rabbit owners should work with their veterinarians to determine if this product is a good choice for their animals, as well as proper timing and administration of the vaccine.

About RHD

The most common sign of RHD virus infection is sudden death with blood-stained noses caused by internal bleeding. Infected rabbits may develop a fever, be hesitant to eat, or show respiratory or nervous system signs.

Some rabbits may be asymptomatic carriers capable of shedding the virus for up to 2 months post-infection. Rabbits that survive may show signs of dullness and anorexia. They are carriers of infection and can shed the virus for at least 42 days.

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RHDV is spread easily through direct contact or exposure to an infected rabbit's saliva, secretions from the eyes and nose, urine, feces, or blood. People can spread the virus on their clothing and shoes, as well as via contaminated materials such as food, water, carcasses, etc.

The disease presents a particular threat to rabbits that are commingled with others, such as at exhibitions or spend time outdoors where RHD is found in the environment. BOAH recommends rabbit owners practice good biosecurity to protect their animals.

More Information

More information about RHD is online at: www.in.gov/boah/species-information/rabbits/

Medgene Labs FAQs are online at: <https://medgenelabs.com/rhdv2/>

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