



Veterinary Surgeons' Board



FROM THE REGISTRAR

This is absolutely the last Board newsletter for the year. It is a short but important one with an article for the attention of equine veterinary surgeons (research survey), a timely reminder about preventing infection with Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus for those who are treating domestic rabbits and an update on mobile veterinary practice audits.

Also a reminder that if you are planning to practise in 2019, make sure you renew your registration before 31 December 2018 on the [Board website](#). Please note the Board office will be closed from 4.30pm Friday 21 December 2018 until 8:30am Wednesday 2 January 2019.

On behalf of the Board and staff, I hope everyone manages to have some relaxing and pleasant downtime over the busy Christmas and New Year period and is refreshed for the coming year.

Dr Sue Godkin
Registrar



OUTBREAKS OF RABBIT HAEMORRHAGIC DISEASE VIRUS (RHDV – CALICIVIRUS)

There have been recent reports of outbreaks of the Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV - calicivirus), and regional groups are also planning releases of RHDV1 K-5, which is a new strain introduced last year to help control pest rabbits. This means that rabbit owners need to be

reminded to take steps to protect their pets.

Protection measures include vaccination and other precautions such as insect-proof enclosures (see advice below). Attached a flyer for you to use on your noticeboards to help with this reminder.

In addition to RHDV1 K-5, there are now multiple strains of RHDV1 and RHDV2 present throughout Australia. RHDV1-K5 provides better pest rabbit control in cooler-wetter climates than other strains.

The commercial rabbit vaccine will protect domestic rabbits from RHDV1 strains, **but not RHDV2 strains**. This virus had arrived unexpectedly and an effective vaccine is not available in Australia.

Despite virus outbreaks being more common in spring, owners of domestic rabbits should be mindful that RHDV or the myxoma virus is a risk at any time of the year. **Pet rabbit owners are strongly advised to keep vaccinations up to date.**

RHDV affects only rabbits, and is not harmful to native animals, humans, or domestic pets other than rabbits.

Protection measures

- If possible, keep rabbits inside or until they can be vaccinated.
- Prevent direct and indirect contact between domestic and wild rabbits. Rabbit-proof your backyard to prevent access by wild rabbits.
- Good insect control is vitally important and will help reduce the risks of introduction of both RHDV and myxomatosis. Insect control should include insect proofing the hutch or keeping the rabbits indoors.
- Limit contact between and handling of unfamiliar pet rabbits.
- Avoid cutting grass and feeding it to rabbits if there is the risk of contamination from wild rabbits.
- Remove uneaten food on a daily basis.
- Wash hands with warm soapy water in between handling rabbits that are not normally in contact with each other.
- Infected rabbits should be isolated and any dead rabbits should be disposed of in a manner that will minimise environmental contamination. Contact your local vet for more information.
- All cages and equipment should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Disinfectants that can be used to decontaminate equipment include 10% bleach, 10% sodium hydroxide, or parvocide disinfectants. Autoclaving will also kill the virus.

Means of spread

- Rabbit to rabbit contact.
- Via biting insects.
- Spread throughout the environment by bush flies and blow flies.
- Under favourable conditions, the virus can also persist in soil, and on pasture, hay and clothing.

For more information

- Vaccinations and safety precautions – the Australian Veterinary Association website - ava.com.au/rabbit-calicivirus
- Members of the public can report rabbit sightings or signs of disease through the RabbitScan app. The RabbitScan app is available from iTunes or GooglePlay, or can be downloaded from the FeralScan website.
- healthierlandscapes.org.au or agric.wa.gov.au/rhdv
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development 9368 3080

UPDATE ON AUDITING OF HOUSE CALL VETERINARY PRACTICES

At its last meeting the Board considered a pleasing report on the follow up audits of a number of house call veterinary practices in the southwest of the state. The Board noted that there has been a substantial improvement in the standard of the clinical records, particularly in the recording of scheduled drug use and the recording of the treatment of animals owned by the veterinary surgeon or family members.

RESEARCH PROJECT – EQUINE VETERINARY SURGEONS REQUESTED TO ASSIST

Please consider helping Raelene Harrison out with the below research project

"I am currently undertaking a postgraduate major research project in veterinary ethics and equine welfare at the Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Melbourne.



The purpose of the research is to investigate whether an equine veterinarian recognises an “ethical trilemma”, the main factors that impact their decision and analyse the impact that decision has, or has the potential to have, on equine welfare.

An “ethical trilemma” occurs where you need to balance your own obligations and duties as a veterinarian with the welfare of your patient (the horse) and the interests of your client (the owner and/or trainer).

The research project will consider the well-being, moral stress, regulatory and insurance consequences of the “ethical trilemma” on equine veterinarians.

My research project includes an on-line survey to be completed by practising equine veterinarians.

I would be grateful if you would support this research by completing the [on-line survey](#).

The research will benefit the veterinary profession and equine welfare.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Our contact details are contained in the plain language statement within the survey.

Best wishes

Raelene Harrison"

Postal Address: PO Box 1721 Melville South WA 6156

Office: Suite 1, First Floor, Melville Professional Centre, 275 Marmion Street, Melville WA 6156

Telephone: (08) 9317 2353 **Facsimile:** (08) 9317 2356 **Email:** admin@vsbwa.org.au

www.vsbwa.org.au