

## Rabbit Vaccinations

Rabbits need vaccinating to protect them against diseases which are widespread in the wild rabbit population. As well being transmitted directly between rabbits in close contact, these diseases can also be spread indirectly via clothes, fleas and insects. The diseases are highly infectious and usually untreatable. Onset of symptoms can be very rapid and rabbits are often found dead, sometimes with no obvious symptoms.

Prevention really is better than cure!

### **Myxomatosis**

The virus is spread via fleas, mites and insects as well as via contact between infected rabbits. It can also persist in the environment (e.g. hutches). Early symptoms include puffy swellings around the face, progressing to blindness and death within 10-14 days. Recovery is rare and sadly for affected rabbits euthanasia is generally the best option.

### **Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease**

Also known as Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD) or Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD), RHD causes internal bleeding and is almost always fatal. As well as being transmitted by direct contact between rabbits, it can spread through the air when rabbits are in close proximity, or via clothing etc. It can also persist in the environment. Rabbits may simply be found dead, sometimes with a bloody discharge at the mouth or nose. There are now TWO strains of this virus in the UK. The new variant RHD-2 was identified in the UK near the end of 2015 and there have been a number of reported outbreaks in Devon. For more information see our RHD information sheet.

### **Vaccinations**

Our recommended vaccination protocol is as follows:

- Myxomatosis and RHD-1 cover is provided by the combination Myxo-RHD vaccine. This can be administered from 5 weeks providing up to 12 months protection
- RHD-2 cover is provided by the more recently available Filavac vaccine. This can be given from the age of 10 weeks, a minimum of 3 weeks after Myxo-RHD, providing 12 months of protection



Booster vaccinations should be given at least annually and can be given more frequently, for example 6-monthly, to rabbits in high-risk environments. If baby rabbits are vaccinated very young we recommend a second dose at 12 weeks to ensure protection.