A large-scale outbreak of rabbit hemorrhagic disease (RHD), caused by rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus 2 (RHDV2), began in the spring of 2020 in the southwestern United States and adjacent northwestern Mexico. Categorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as both a Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) and a Notifiable Lagomorph Disease in the National List of Reportable Animal Diseases (NLRAD), diagnostic testing for RHDV2 was initially limited to the USDA Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (FADDL) on Plum Island, New York. Recently, USDA determined that RHDV2 outbreaks in some southwestern states and Washington state have reached “stable” status and has consequently disseminated virology testing procedures for RHDV2 to be conducted in additional laboratories. Specifically, the USGS National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) and the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) have been designated as primary laboratories for testing wild rabbits for RHDV2 in support of State, Federal, and Tribal wildlife management agencies. Pursuant to this status change, NWHC is issuing the following addendum to our standard Diagnostic Case Submission Guidelines.

NWHC Goals and Objectives for Providing RHDV2 Technical Assistance to Partners

NWHC has established the following overarching goals for assisting partners in their management response to RHDV2: (1) inform situational awareness, (2) mobilize knowledge, and (3) assess potential population-level impacts of this disease. To inform situational awareness we will provide diagnostic services to State, Federal, and Tribal natural resource management partners to document both the (a) geographic and (b) host range of RHDV2. Data will be managed and served in our Wildlife Health Information Sharing Partnership – event reporting system (WHISPers).

Species Accepted for RHDV2 Diagnostic Evaluation

NWHC will accept wild North American members of the Order Lagomorpha (rabbits, hares, and pikas) for diagnostic evaluation for RHDV2. NWHC will also accept feral rabbits (domestic rabbits released from captivity) involved in mortality events as they may contribute to disease transmission in the wild.

Submissions from Lagomorph Morbidity and Mortality Events

- NWHC will conduct complete cause-of-death assessment for morbidity/mortality events involving greater than five individual lagomorphs.
- For smaller events (less than five individuals), NWHC will restrict diagnostic evaluation to RHDV2 virology testing (this restriction does not apply to threatened and endangered species).

Testing Limitations

All diagnostic submissions to NWHC must originate from appropriate State, Federal, and Tribal natural resource management agencies with regulatory authority over wild lagomorphs.

- To document the geographic range of RHDV2, we will accept carcasses from mortality events in states and counties until RHDV2 has been documented in wild or feral lagomorphs in that county.
- To document the host range of RHDV2 in counties with multiple species of wild lagomorphs, we will accept carcasses of different lagomorph species until RHDV2 has been documented in all wild species present in that county.
Recognizing that legitimate wildlife and disease management needs may exceed the above limitations, NWHC will consider, in coordination with our Epidemiology Team, exceptional cases (e.g. multiple management authorities in a county, size or presentation of mortality event, size or habitat makeup of large counties) for diagnostic evaluation.

**FADDL Confirmation and FAD Numbers**
If NWHC documents the first wild or feral case of RHDV2 in a state, or the first case of RHDV2 in a new lagomorph species, test results will be considered “preliminary positive,” and NWHC will forward diagnostic samples to the USDA FADDL for confirmation. Positive RHDV2 tests at NWHC for all other cases are considered “confirmed.” While a “FAD number,” assigned to an individual case by USDA or the State Animal Health Officer (SAHO), is not required for any submission to NWHC, a FAD number is required for all samples sent to FADDL for confirmatory testing. To reduce delays, submitters from states where RHDV2 has not been confirmed in wild rabbits, or when submitting wild species that have not had RHDV2 confirmed, may consider obtaining a FAD number prior to submitting carcasses to NWHC by contacting the USDA or their SAHO.

**Mortality Event Information Sharing**
Due to the nature of the current RHDV2 outbreak, which is impacting both domestic and wild lagomorphs across a wide geographic area, USDA has requested that NWHC share general information for RHDV2-suspect mortality events reported to the NWHC, including county, species affected, scale of the mortality event, and submitting agency. In some cases, USDA may request finer-scale location information (e.g. nearest town, township) from NWHC or the submitting agency. If the submitting agency would prefer finer-scale location information not be shared, please note that request with our Epidemiology Team.

**Beyond Diagnostic Submissions**
The NWHC is available to provide guidance on RHDV2 surveillance, risk assessments, and other research-based objectives, and more extensive diagnostic services for partner-based research activities. Please communicate with NWHC via the Epidemiology Team early in your planning process.