



# Maidstone Veterinary Clinic

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## RABBIT CALICIVIRUS DISEASE

Rabbit calicivirus disease is an acute, fatal disease caused by a virus in the family *Caliciviridae*. Susceptibility is influenced by age; rabbits less than one month old are fully resistant to natural infection, those between one and two months of age may be affected but at a low percentage, while rabbits older than two months are highly susceptible.

### Transmission

The virus is present in blood, organs, secretions, excretions and on skin and mucous membranes, principally during the late stage of infection and after death. It can survive up to 4 months in the environment at 20 degrees and longer at colder temperatures.

### Signs

Predominantly young and adult rabbits die suddenly following 6 to 24 hours fever accompanied by mild clinical signs. Most rabbits appear depressed by 18 hours after exposure to the virus and become progressively quieter and die with minimal apparent distress by 30-40 hours. A few rabbits will develop a thin bloody nasal discharge as a result of lung congestion. Up to 50% of rabbits die at the age of 5-6 weeks and 99% of adult rabbits die within 24 hours of the onset of clinical signs.

### Vaccination

Rabbits should be vaccinated at the age of 2.5-3 months. If animals are vaccinated before the age of 2.5 months, they should be revaccinated at 3 to 4 weekly intervals until they are three months old. Healthy animals over 3 months of age in normal conditions may have a lifelong protection against RCD following a single dose of vaccine. However to ensure maintenance of immunity an annual booster dose is recommended.

There may be a local irritation to the vaccine, sometimes associated with a transient inappetance.