

LATE SUMMER & FALL WARNING For the Coastal Areas of CA and OR

If you live in the coastal areas of California or Oregon, this is the time of year for Myxomatosis to raise its ugly head. There have already been several cases reported.

Myxomatosis (caused by the myxoma virus) is a severe viral disease that was introduced in Australia to help control the wild rabbit population in. It was also introduced to Belgium in 1953, and has spread though out Europe.

It is found in the wild rabbit population in the coastal areas of CA and OR. The virus is mainly transmitted via a mosquito to domestic rabbits, but can also be transmitted via fleas. The California Bush Rabbit is known to be a carrier and has become resistant to the disease over time. This species of rabbit is found mainly in the coastal areas of CA and OR, which is why we see Myxo occur in there areas.

Myxo is an acute disease. Rabbits get sick rapidly and will show lethargy, swelling around the eyes, ears, nose and mouth, as well as have swollen genitals. The ears may feel hot due to fever. It is almost always fatal. Two photos are attached. The first one shows a rabbit with the classic swelling around the eyes. The second photo shows the watery-filled genitalia. Myxomas, nodular swellings, can be found around the eyes and other area of the head, in later stages of the disease. There is no cure.

While the initial infection is from a mosquito bite, it is viral and can be spread on fomites in the air to other rabbits in your herd. The spread will follow airflow patterns. If you have a rabbit with Myxo, be aware that you can transmit the virus via your hands and clothes. Likewise, if a rabbit contacts the virus, be sure to decontaminate the cage and feed and water bowls before using with another rabbit.

If you find a rabbit with Myxo, it is best to cull the rabbit as soon as you see the classic symptoms. Some actually cull two healthy rabbits around the infected animal to try to control spread of the disease. If you are in doubt, move the rabbit to an isolated area, and treat it as if contaminated. The virus is highly infectious.

The key to controlling Myxo is to control mosquitos, if you live in an infected area. Make sure that there is no standing or stagnant water on your property. Mosquito abatement programs might also include sprays such as Purge. If there are no mosquitos, there is no disease.

As for concerns about shows and fairs, rabbits with this disease are acutely ill, and would not show up at a show or fair.

This message serves only to educate those living in high-risk areas to be aware of the symptoms and preventative measures for this disease. Myxo is not new and has been around for a long time. Hopefully this information will help anyone being

affected to know what it is and how to prevent it in the future. It is most common in the late summer and fall, which is when the mosquito population is at its peak.

Mosquitos also can carry Lyme disease and West Nile Virus, so keeping them under control is good for your rabbits as well as for yourself!