

Dear

This appeal is in follow up to the recent release of Calicivirus (RHDV2) that has spread and is killing hundreds of thousands of domestic rabbits across Australia, in hope that we can secure a vaccine for our pet rabbits.

The first strain of RHDV, known as the Czech strain (belonging to the RHDV1 family), was released by the Australian government in 1996 to help control wild rabbits in an effort to minimise environmental damage being caused. This followed an accidental release of the virus in 1995 from CSIRO field trials on Wardang Island in South Australia as well as numerous controlled releases of RHDV1 and RHDV-K5 since this time. While an effective vaccine, Cylap® has been available for many years to protect domestic rabbits against these strains of the virus; RHDV2 appeared in 2015 and to date, no vaccine exists for Australian pet rabbit owners.

There is an Australian manufacturer ready to make the vaccine for domestic rabbits
Dr Mark White of Sydney laboratory, [Troidlia Biovet](#), has actively sought approval to develop a vaccine to combat RHDV2; however, his application is still awaiting government approval. It is imperative that manufacturers such as *Troidlia Biovet* are given the necessary approvals to develop a vaccine, as well as rabbit owners given the time to vaccinate their rabbits, prior to the release of RHDV2.

The release of this virus was done so without any regard for pet rabbit owners. In other countries, the governments ensured a vaccine was available to vets for domestic rabbits; however, despite the first case of RHDV2 being reported in 2015, approval has yet been given to allow the development of a vaccine that combats RHDV2.

Without a vaccine for pet rabbit owners it will be formally used

We have come to learn that an application to formally use and release RHDV2 recombinant strains is going to be applied for, to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

While we understand the problems faced by farmers from feral rabbits, we strongly disagree with the lack of approval given to manufacturers to develop a vaccine to protect pet and domestic rabbits.

The rabbits we are desperately seeking to protect are not the feral rabbits causing destruction to Australia's ecology. They are domestic rabbits that live in our homes and are an integral and deeply loved part of the family and they deserve a vaccine against RHDV2.

We have come together as a united community to gain your support and to help you see that combatting biosecurity with biological warfare is not the answer. It is important that you sympathise with Australian pet rabbit owners, and see that we are left with no choice, and no solution because our government has not approved a vaccine that can easily avoid catastrophe.

If your child was sick, then it is any parents loving duty to ensure that their child receives the best care and medicine in the world. To many domestic rabbit owners, their bunny rabbits *are* family, so it is our duty to do everything we can to stop the horrendous outbreak of something that is simply avoidable. How would you feel if your family member was affected by a virus, that you knew the government can release a vaccine for? Every pet owner would ensure that their beloved four legged pet is to be protected against such a thing.

We would like to to push for an amendment to the Biological Control Act to add a section that stipulates any new virus for importation must be accompanied by pre-approval of the corresponding vaccine for domestic pets. And, if a new virus is found in the wild without having approval for deliberate release, it must be contained and eradicated – no exceptions. With this type of new action, our bunnies may not be at risk with a new virus in the same way as they are now with RHDV2. Already this year more breeders have lost large numbers of rabbits to the newer version Super Mark 2 released earlier this year, which also negatively affects themselves as small business owners. Despite what we were told, the vaccine for RHDV1 is ineffective for the release of RHDV2.

WE NEED A VACCINE!

As our Local MP, we plead with you to take this issue to Parliament, asking our government to ‘cut the red tape’ and support the development of a multivalent vaccine to protect pet rabbits.

There are more than 22,000 of us asking you for help!

The Australian Rabbit community has a petition, with over 22,000 signatures to date against the release of RHDV2 Rabbit Virus. The URL for this petition can be found here: <https://goo.gl/hvN7Q7>.

There is also a trending hashtag used on Instagram by the united Australian rabbit community. I implore you to look this up via **#itsnotjustarabbit**. This trending hashtag is spreading and raising awareness about the risk imposed upon domestic rabbits and their owners by the release of this devastating virus. Every rabbit pet owner is taking a stance on the impact that pet bunnies make in their lives.

We look forward to hearing back from you with a positive response taking into consideration the lives of not just our furry family members, but also their loving owners who put the health of all the members within their household as a number one priority.

Kind regards,