

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Vaccine

In October, a case of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease was confirmed in a feral population in the Edmonton area. Knowing this is an extremely contagious disease with a high mortality rate, it seemed prudent to start vaccinating against this virus.

- Having just completed the first of our vaccine clinics, I thought I would share a few insights about importation of the vaccine that I had to learn along the way. Perhaps my experience could save a few headaches for others.

There is no Canadian approved vaccine, so we had to import the vaccine from France. There is an American vaccine now, but it is still new, and Medgene won't export to Canada yet (at least they would not when I inquired in November/21 - Perhaps next year that might be an option). To import the vaccine, a permit (about \$62) must be obtained from the Canadian Center for Veterinary Biologics. Among the assurances you give, you agree to not advertise the use of an unapproved biologic. That means, a clinic close to you might have the vaccine, but you have to ask about it. If you have just a few rabbit patients that wouldn't make importing worthwhile, I would encourage you to make a few phone calls. I am certain other clinics in the Edmonton area (and Calgary) have this vaccine.

Another hiccup is that the importing vet is responsible for control and administration of the vaccine. So, a clinic that has the vaccine can't just sell a few doses to you. Your clients would have to go to them.

The vaccine from Filavac comes in two forms. The 50 dose vial is relatively cheap **IF** you can use all of the doses. Unfortunately, this vial is only good for 2 hours once opened (hence vaccine "clinics" to try to vaccinate a large number of rabbits in a very short time), and you may have some hub loss, meaning a few less than 50 doses per vial. The other problem with this form was the expiry. We received our vaccine mid December - the 50 dose vial was only good until April 23/22.

The other form is individual doses. Expiry was longer (a little over one year), but the cost is about 9 times more per dose.

The permit from the CCBC will only allow a certain number of doses to be imported, and each dose must be accounted for.

Other costs besides the vaccine include: transport fees (\$1500), Canada Customs fees(\$350), and fees for an import broker(\$400). So, there is a good chance that getting the vaccine into the country costs significantly more than the vaccine itself.

If I had known earlier, I would have contacted the broker before the vaccines arrived to do the paperwork and pay fees. As it was, the broker/carrier didn't do any of the paperwork prior to arrival, and the vaccines sat at the airport for four days - which adds further charges per day.

Also, you may have to arrange to pick up the vaccines from the airport (before 6pm for Air Canada). If you have to do this, it will undoubtedly be during a blizzard.

On the good side, Filavac knows what they are doing to keep the vaccines safe. I was worried about receiving the vaccines in the middle of winter, but my fears were unfounded. The packaging was space age, and temperatures were monitored all the way.

I would encourage Alberta vets to vaccinate their client rabbits. If you have questions, or want help walking through the steps of importing the vaccine, feel free to contact me.

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