

# Is Calicivirus contagious from cats to rabbits?

Dr. Fredley explains that caliciviruses are species specific and that feline calicivirus (FCV) is not transmissible to rabbits.

## Question:

Hello, we have recently had a couple cats diagnosed with calicivirus. Is this contagious to rabbits?

Thank you!

## Answer:

Hello,

Because the Feline Calicivirus (FCV) is highly species specific, rabbits are not susceptible to feline calicivirus. Rabbits do have their own calicivirus however, called Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) or Rabbit Calicivirus Disease (RCD). This virus causes acute death in young rabbits usually under 8 weeks of age. Other clinical signs include fever, anorexia, swollen eyelids, paralysis, and ocular and nasal hemorrhage. RHD is a reportable disease in the United States and has been eradicated from the domestic rabbit population in the US. However, there are still occasional outbreaks found in wild/feral rabbits.

Although caliciviruses can be found in other species, the feline calicivirus infects only domestic and exotic cats and has also been reported in cheetahs. Here is an [information sheet](#) with more information about clinical signs of FCV, treatment, prevention and shedding.

With that in mind, it is still important to think about sanitation and biosecurity when handling cats with respiratory disease in a shelter setting. Always wear gloves or wash hands after handling sick animals, and use a sanitizing agent that kills calicivirus for environmental cleaning. We like accelerated hydrogen peroxide (Rescue™) at a concentration of 1:32 (4oz/gal – 10 minute contact time) or 1:16 (8oz/gal – 5 minute contact time). Bleach is also effective at a concentration of 1:32 (4oz/gal), but needs the application of detergent beforehand as bleach loses efficacy when faced with organic material (sneeze marks, hair, feces, etc.).

If you are noticing signs of ocular or nasal discharge in your rabbit population, then this is more likely caused by bacteria such as Pasteurella and other commensal bacteria. Oral ulcerations or abscesses in rabbits are usually due to dental disease. Please see your veterinarian if you suspect your rabbit has an upper respiratory infection or signs of dental disease.

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