

- are you in the know?

Strains of myxomatosis

Although myxomatosis is typically fatal in rabbits without immunity, there are many different strains and some are more virulent than others. As evolution has progressed and the virus adapts accordingly, the modern myxoma virus may not kill rabbits quite as readily or rapidly as older strains.

Use of the Shope fibroma virus strain in Nobivac Myxo* is well proven in terms of safety and achieves good levels of efficacy. Inactivated (killed) myxomatosis vaccines are generally ineffective.

Other approaches that have been taken with mixed results have included using a weakened strain of the myxoma virus as a vaccine.

Can rabbits contract myxomatosis after vaccination?

Vaccination can never guarantee 100% protection against any disease. However, when used as recommended, Nobivac Myxo* offers the best chance of immunity against this dreadful disease. Rabbits exposed to myxoma virus who have a vaccinal immunity, typically do not develop the disease.

Vaccination may, however, be ineffective if given to rabbits already incubating the disease, or in rabbits who are immunologically incompetent – which could be due to a number of factors, including underlying health problems, poor nutrition, genetic factors, stress and drug therapy.

For maximum protection, care is needed in administration of the vaccine to ensure that a small volume is introduced within the skin (intradermally) as well as beneath (subcutaneously) as this stimulates a more powerful immune response. In addition, control of fleas, good basic husbandry and steps to reduce stress should be undertaken to reduce the risk of myxomatosis and complement vaccination.



Photograph: Adelle Homer

Articles of Constitutions, Rules and Recommendations relating to Myxomatosis and VHD

A4.4 Report of VHD Outbreak - Any member of the BRC in whose rabbitry a case of VHD or Myxomatosis occurs must report the matter to the Association. All members are encouraged to report any outbreaks of VHD or Myxomatosis they know of.

B3.17 VHD Outbreak - Any member in whose rabbitry a case of VHD is confirmed shall be informed by the Secretary that they may not exhibit, judge, steward or handle rabbits at any show held under BRC Rules or attend any venue where rabbits are exhibited until the elapse of four months following the last death of a rabbit due to VHD.

G1.2 Notification to District Advisers of Myxomatosis - If a report is received by the BRC of any cause of Myxomatosis/VHD in the rabbitry of any member, the Secretary shall inform all District Advisers within a radius of 20 miles of the rabbitry.

The BRC recommends that any vaccination marks or nodules should be ignored by judges.

The British Rabbit Council Health and Welfare Committee recommends that all rabbits are regularly vaccinated against Myxomatosis and VHD. Members are also reminded that the importation of vaccines is illegal.



* Nobivac Myxo is a prescription only medicine (POM) available from your vet.