

A young girl with braids, wearing a pink top, is smiling and holding a small brown and white rabbit. The background is bright and slightly blurred.

*Show you care.*

*The importance  
of vaccination  
for your rabbit*

The Intervet logo, featuring the word "intervet" in a lowercase, sans-serif font with a stylized arc above the letters.

# *Myxomatosis and its control*

## ***What are the signs of myxomatosis?***

Myxomatosis is caused by a virus. The first signs of infection are puffy, fluid filled swellings around the head and face.

“Sleepy eyes” are another classic sign, along with swollen lips, tiny swellings on the inside of the ear and puffy swellings around the anus and genitals.

Within a day or so, these swellings can become so severe that they can cause blindness. Eating and drinking becomes progressively more difficult and death usually follows within 12 days.

## ***Is my rabbit at risk?***

All breeds of rabbit can be affected, including the wild rabbit found throughout the country.

## ***How is the disease spread?***

Myxomatosis is spread by blood-sucking insects, such as the rabbit flea and possibly mosquitoes. The virus can remain alive in the blood of hibernating fleas over the winter.



mosquito



flea

## ***What happens when an infected insect bites a susceptible rabbit?***

A small amount of live virus is placed in the skin of the rabbit as the insect sucks blood. Within a few days the virus passes into the blood of the rabbit which enables it to be moved around to several sites. The virus mainly multiplies in the skin around the eyes, the nose, the face, the soft skin inside the ears and also the skin around the anus and genitals of the rabbit.

## ***How long is the incubation period?***

It can be anything from 5 to 14 days before signs of the disease begin to show.

## ***How long do infected rabbits usually survive?***

Some may survive for weeks or months after infection. But in general, a severe infection in a susceptible rabbit will lead to death within 12 days, usually from a secondary lung infection.

Not all affected rabbits die - although in the wild, fewer than 10% survive. But even with intensive nursing, myxomatosis can be a very protracted disease, leading to severe scabbing and scarring on the head and body.

## ***How can the disease be controlled?***

There are two main methods:

- [Control of insect parasites](#)
- [Vaccination](#)

## ***Insect control***

Flea control is vital. Keep wild rabbits away from pets and use flea control methods such as spot-ons and sprays.

Mosquito control is more difficult but insect repellent strips and nets can be used. Dry bedding will also discourage mosquitoes.

## ***Vaccination***

Intervet offers a vaccine against myxomatosis. Although no vaccine can ever guarantee 100% protection, it offers the best possible chance of producing immunity against myxomatosis.

Rabbits may occasionally develop a small lump after vaccination but this disappears over time.

A single vaccination should be given to rabbits over 6 weeks of age. Immunity will take some 14 days to become established, so the animal should not be exposed to infection during this time.

## ***Boosters***

An annual booster is recommended, except in situations where the disease is rife or the rabbit is likely to be exposed frequently to infection. In these cases, 6 monthly boosters are advisable.

When giving a single annual vaccination, it is probably best to vaccinate in May or June.

# ***VHD and its control***

## ***Viral haemorrhagic disease***

VHD can be rapidly fatal in an unvaccinated rabbit. The only protection you can give your rabbit is by vaccination. VHD is spread by direct and indirect (clothing, shoes) contact and fleas.

VHD vaccinations should be given from 8 weeks onwards, but are usually given at 10-12 weeks of age. Unfortunately, VHD vaccination has to be given 14 days apart from myxomatosis vaccination. Boosters are given annually.



*Show you care.*



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## **More information**

For further information please don't hesitate to contact your veterinary surgeon or visit our website



[www.F-O-V.co.uk](http://www.F-O-V.co.uk)

Produced by: Intervet UK Limited,  
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Nobivac® Myxo is a vaccine containing the Shope fibroma strain.

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