



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Raccoon-Rabies Vaccination Baiting Begins August 22

Operations Maybe Extended due to Weather Conditions

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and local health departments will begin fall oral rabies vaccination (ORV) operations this month in 12 northeast and eastern Ohio counties. Weather permitting, baiting will begin Monday, Aug. 22 and will cover 4,102 square miles of the state’s northeastern and eastern border. Bait distribution should be complete by Sept. 11.

Rabies is a viral disease that affects mammals, including people. It is almost always fatal. Rabies vaccine baiting operations are intended to immunize raccoons that are at greatest risk of being exposed to raccoon rabies coming into the state. This will then create an “immune barrier” along the Ohio state line that can prevent the spread of raccoon-rabies variant (RRV) into the rest of the state.

As in past years, bait distribution with the oral rabies vaccine Raboral V-RG® will take place in all of Columbiana, Jefferson and Mahoning counties and parts of Ashtabula, Belmont, Carroll, Harrison Monroe and Trumbull counties. In addition, for the fifth year in a row, a new oral rabies vaccine called ONRAB® will be field-tested in parts of Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Portage and Trumbull counties as part of a national trial involving five states.

Baits will be distributed by various methods in each county, including fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter and vehicles staffed by USDA and local health departments. Residents in the areas to be baited should be aware of low-flying aircraft and should keep children and pets away from the baits. Dogs in particular are attracted to the baits and will occasionally eat them. The baits are not harmful to pets. Please keep the following information in mind:

- Know what the baits look like.
 - The coated sachet, which will be distributed by aircraft, is about the size of a ketchup packet. It is white and rolled in a brown fishmeal glaze.
 - In urban areas where baits will be distributed, the sachet will be inside a hard, brown fishmeal block that is about 2 by 2-inches.
 - The ONRAB® vaccine will be distributed by vehicle in only three counties - Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake - and by aircraft in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Portage and Trumbull counties. It is in a blister pack about 1 by 2 inches and has a dark-green coloring and sweet-smelling waxy coating.
- Instruct children to leave the baits alone.
- The baits are not harmful to pets. Once your area is baited, keep dogs and cats inside or on leashes for up to five days. Most baits disappear within 24 hours; however, it is important raccoons have every opportunity to eat them.

- Do not attempt to take bait away from your pet; you may be bitten.
- Anyone handling baits should wear gloves. If baits are found in areas frequented by pets or children, toss them into deeper cover. Damaged baits can be disposed of in the trash.
- If a person is exposed to the vaccine (liquid) within the bait, thoroughly wash any areas of the skin that came into contact with the vaccine with soap and water.
- If someone has been exposed to the vaccine or has questions about the baiting, call the ORV Information line at 888-RABIES1 (722-4371) or your local health department.

During 2015, six animals were confirmed to be infected with raccoon-rabies variant virus in Ohio, including three raccoons from Mahoning County and three raccoons from Trumbull County. So far in 2016, one raccoon in Mahoning County and two raccoons in Trumbull County have tested positive for raccoon-rabies variant. [Details of rabies cases are available on the ODH website.](#)

The rabies virus is found in the saliva of affected animals, most often raccoons, skunks and bats, and is spread when saliva from an infected animal gets into a wound or mucous membrane (such as the eye or mouth). Animal bites are the most common route of exposure. Bats, raccoons and skunks pose the greatest risk of rabies in Ohio. To protect your family against this still-deadly disease:

- Avoid contact with wild animals and animals you do not know.
- Vaccinate your pets against rabies and keep them current on their shots.
- If bitten, call your doctor. If your pet has contact with a wild animal, call your veterinarian.
- Potential rabies exposures should also be reported to your local health department.

Ohio's partners in the multistate baiting are Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, and the three-state effort will involve distribution of about 1.5 million baits and cover more than 6,400 square miles by fixed wing aircraft, helicopter, and ground/vehicle baiting. ODH has participated in the program since 1997 and almost 15 million baits have been distributed in Ohio over that time.

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Resources:

Ohio Department of Health Zoonotic Disease Program
<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/orv>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/rabies/

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services National Rabies Program
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/rabies>

Editors: Please note the following from ODNR:

“According to Ohio Administrative Code 1501:31-15-03, it is illegal to live trap, move and release raccoons. Persons dealing with a nuisance raccoon cannot relocate the animal. There are only two legal options for nuisance raccoons; euthanize or release on the same property where they were live trapped. Uninformed people who are relocating nuisance raccoons may be contributing to rabies crossing the barrier.”