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RACCOON RABIES VACCINATION BAITING SLATED FOR TUESDAY

Operations will begin Sept. 6

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) will once again participate in a multistate effort coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to reduce the spread of raccoon-strain rabies.

The Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) baiting begins Sept. 6 in Ohio, weather permitting, and will cover 4,765 square miles of the state’s eastern border. Aerial distribution should be completed within 10 days with good weather; ground baiting may continue through Sept. 23.

As in past years, baiting will take place in Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning, Columbiana and Jefferson counties, and parts of Carroll, Harrison, Belmont, Monroe and Washington counties. The baiting teams also will operate in Lake and Geauga counties, plus parts of Cuyahoga, Summit and Portage counties due to the 23 rabid raccoons reported in Cuyahoga, Geauga and Lake counties as of Aug. 30.

“Vaccine baiting is key to preventing the spread of raccoon-strain rabies,” said ODH Director J. Nick Baird, M.D. “Large, multistate efforts such as vaccine baiting illustrate the true value of local, state and federal partnerships.”

Two types of bait will be used. Airplanes will drop a small plastic sachet, about the size of a ketchup packet, coated in fishmeal. This will be the first time coated sachet packets will be used in the Ohio counties bordering Pennsylvania and West Virginia. In urban areas, the vaccine will be inside a hard, brown 2-x-2-x-1-inch fishmeal block which will be distributed by vehicles staffed by local health departments and other local agency volunteers. Most of the 879,397 baits will be distributed by air, with the use of specially equipped planes from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and a helicopter from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Ohio’s partners in the multistate baiting are: Maryland, West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Tennessee, in the Appalachian Ridge ORV program. The seven-state effort will involve distribution of about 4.4 million baits and cover more than 28,000 square miles.

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ODH Rabies Baiting

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Be aware that your dogs may be 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 airplanes, 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 by vehicle, the sachet will be inside a hard, brown fishmeal block, about 2-x-2-x-1-inch square.
- Instruct children to leave the baits alone.
- Anyone who finds a stray bait should pick it up with a plastic bag, paper towel or rubber gloves. If the bait is intact, toss it into a nearby ditch, wooded area or other raccoon habitat. If it is partially eaten or damaged, place the bait in a plastic bag and dispose of it in the trash.
- Do not attempt to take bait away from your pet; you may be bitten.
- 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.
- If a person is exposed to the vaccine (red liquid), thoroughly wash any areas of the skin that came into contact with the vaccine with soap and water. In the unlikely event a blister-like rash develops, contact your family doctor.
- If someone has been exposed to the vaccine or has questions about the baiting, call the local health department or ODH's information line at 1-888-RABIES-1.

Rabies is a viral disease that affects animals and people. The strain of rabies associated with raccoons is of particular public health concern because it can affect other wild animals and pets. The virus is found in the saliva of affected animals, most often raccoons, skunks and bats, and is spread by a bite or scratch. 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 domestic 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. Rabies exposures should also be reported to your local health department.

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Contact: Ohio Department of Health – Office of Public Affairs (614) 644-8562

Editors: Please note the following from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources:

“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.”