



Ohio Department of Health  
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## News Release

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John R. Kasich / Governor  
Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D. / Director



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Spring raccoon-rabies vaccination baiting scheduled for May 2-May 20**

*Operations may be extended due to weather conditions*

COLUMBUS – The Ohio departments of Health (ODH) and Natural Resources (ODNR), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA WS) program and local health departments (LHDs) will begin spring oral rabies vaccination (ORV) operations Monday, May 2, in five northeastern Ohio counties.

“This local, state and federal partnership has protected Ohioans from raccoon-rabies, a deadly infectious disease, for over a decade,” said ODH Director Ted Wymyslo. “Residents in the areas to be baited can help us prevent the spread of raccoon rabies by keeping children and pets away from the baits and ensuring pets are properly vaccinated.”

Vaccine-bait distribution will take place in parts of Lake, Geauga, Cuyahoga, Portage, and Summit counties. Baits will be distributed by various methods in each county, including helicopter and LHD staff in vehicles.

Rabies is a viral disease that affects mammals and people. It is almost always fatal. Since the mid-1970s, a rabies variant associated with raccoons spread rapidly through the eastern United States. Rabies vaccine baiting operations are intended to create an immune barrier to prevent the spread of raccoon-rabies variant (RRV) into the rest of the state. These regular rabies vaccination efforts began in 1997 and have been successful in suppressing rabies in affected areas and protecting the rest of the state. In 2010, two raccoons, three skunks and one calf from eastern Ohio were confirmed RRV positive.

The rabies vaccine is in a small white plastic packet inside a hard, brown, 2-x-2-inch fishmeal block. It will be distributed by vehicles staffed by LHD and other local agency volunteers. Approximately 80 percent (67,680) of the 84,240 baits will be distributed by vehicles.

Weather permitting, baiting will begin Monday, May 2 and will cover approximately 544 square miles of the state’s northeastern area. Helicopter distribution should be complete within one day. Ground baiting may take up to 20 days and is expected to end by May 20.

**MORE**

## ODH Rabies Baiting

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Residents should avoid the baits and keep pets confined during the baiting period. 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 vaccine sachet will be inside a hard, brown fishmeal block, about 2-x-2-inch square.
- Instruct children to leave the baits alone.
- Once your area is baited, keep dogs and cats inside or on leashes for up to three 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 (red liquid), 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 your LHD or ODH's information line at 1-888-722-4371.

The rabies 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 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 LHD.

The 2011 spring baiting is an addition to a much larger operation that takes place in the fall which covers 14 counties in northeast Ohio and adjacent areas in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. USDA WS coordinates this multi-state effort to prevent the spread of raccoon rabies as part of the National Rabies Management Program. ODH has participated in the program since 1997.

For more information on rabies baiting visit the following Web sites:

ODH: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/dis/zoonoses/rabies/orv/orv1.aspx>

USDA APHIS: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/oral\\_rabies/rabies\\_vaccine\\_info.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/rabies_vaccine_info.shtml)

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### **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.”