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News Release

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Annual Raccoon-Rabies Vaccination Baiting Begins in Ohio

Placing animal treats filled with vaccine in the wild helps stop spread of rabies across the state

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Departments of Health (ODH) announced today that the annual rabies baiting is scheduled to begin on Aug. 26 and run through Sept. 20, 2013 across the eastern portion of the state. The oral rabies vaccination (ORV) operations will take place during the next month in 14 northeast and eastern Ohio counties. Weather permitting, baiting will begin on Monday and will cover 4,334 square miles of the state’s northeastern and eastern border. (See map.)

So far in 2013, five cases of RRV have been confirmed, including 4 raccoons in Mahoning County and one cat in Trumbull County. Details of rabies cases are available on the ODH website.

The baiting program is a partnership among ODH, local health departments (LHDs), the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Wildlife Services programs.

ODH wants residents in these areas to be able to recognize the baits and know to keep them away from humans and pets. As in past years, bait distribution with the oral rabies vaccine Raboral V-RG® will take place in all of Ashtabula, Columbiana, Jefferson, Mahoning and Trumbull counties and parts of Belmont, Carroll, Harrison, and Monroe counties. In addition, for the second year in a row, a new oral rabies vaccine called ONRAB® will be field tested in parts of Lake, Portage, Geauga, Summit, and Cuyahoga 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 LHDs. 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 by vehicle, the sachet will be inside a hard, brown fishmeal block, about 2-x-2-inch square. The ONRAB® blister pack, which will be distributed by aircraft and by vehicle in Lake, Portage, Geauga, Summit, and Cuyahoga counties only, is about 1 by 2 inches and has a dark-green coloring and sweet-smelling waxy coating.
- Instruct children to leave the baits alone.

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- 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), 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 toll-free phone number that is printed on the bait; ODH at 614-752-1029 or their local health department

Rabies is a viral disease that affects mammals and people. It is almost always fatal. Rabies vaccine baiting operations are intended to create an immune barrier along Ohio's state lines to prevent the spread of raccoon-rabies variant (RRV) into the rest of the state.

In Ohio, it is illegal to live trap, move and release raccoons. Any one 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.

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.
- Rabies exposures should also be reported to your LHD.

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
www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/dis/zoonoses/rabies/rab1.aspx

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

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services National Rabies Program
www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml