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**MEDIA ADVISORY: USDA is conducting vaccine drops to combat wildlife rabies in Ohio and surrounding states**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services, in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Health and several local county health departments in Ohio, will begin distributing oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits for wildlife in parts of eastern Ohio and surrounding states next week. ORV baits have been distributed in Ohio through aerial drops and by hand since 1997 in partnership with state and local public health agencies and others as part of the USDA National Rabies Management Program. This effort seeks to prevent the westward movement of the rabies virus most often spread by raccoons by creating a barrier along the Appalachian Mountains from the Canadian border to Alabama.

ORV baits will be distributed using fixed-wing airplanes and helicopters, or from vehicles on the ground. The project based out of North Lima, OH, will take place in early to mid-August. Beginning August 1<sup>st</sup>, USDA staff will distribute baits by vehicle in several towns, including Ashtabula, Conneaut, East Palestine, Geneva, Hubbard, Lisbon, Newton Falls and Warren. Baits will also be dispersed by helicopter in urban and suburban areas of eastern Ohio during the second week of August, including Courtland, East Liverpool, Salem, Steubenville, Warren and Youngstown. From approximately August 18-23, baits will be distributed by fixed-wing airplanes in rural areas of eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, including large portions of Ashtabula, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Geauga, Harrison, Jefferson, Lake, Mahoning, Monroe, Portage, and Trumbull counties. Approximately 500,000 baits will be distributed in Ohio alone.

The vaccine distribution campaign in Ohio will use an ORV bait called ONRAB. The vaccine, which is contained in a blister pack, is covered in a waxy green coating that has a sugar-vanilla smell. The odor attracts targeted wild animals, such as raccoons, who eat the baits and are then vaccinated against rabies. ONRAB has been safely distributed in parts of Ohio since 2012 as part of an ongoing field evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the ORV bait in raccoons and skunks. The vaccine baits have been proven safe in many species of animals, including domestic dogs and cats. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the baits. If found, leave the baits undisturbed. If a person has contact with a bait, immediately rinse the contact area with warm water and soap. Do not attempt to remove a bait from an animal's mouth, as you could be bitten. Ingesting the bait will not harm your pet. If your pet has eaten several baits, the pet may experience vomiting or diarrhea that is self-limiting. For photos of the vaccination baits, please visit this [Photo Gallery](#).

Rabies is caused by a virus that infects the central nervous system in mammals and represents a serious public health concern. If exposures to the virus are not treated it is almost always fatal. Costs associated with detection, prevention and control of rabies may exceed \$500 million annually in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 90 percent of reported rabies cases in the U.S. are in wildlife. People are urged not to make contact with or feed wildlife and to keep pet rabies vaccinations current.

For more information about the National Rabies Management Program, visit:  
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/programs/nrmp>



Photo of ONRAB bait

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