

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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CONTACT:

Breanna Adams, director of Environmental Health Services

Phone: (814) 451-6770

Email: BAAdams@eriecountypa.gov

Aerial dropping of rabies vaccine baits begins in Western Erie County

Erie, PA — Baits containing rabies vaccines meant for raccoons will be distributed across Western Erie County by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services over the next few weeks starting Thursday, August 19.

The goal is to keep the rabies epidemic among wildlife from spreading further westward by attempting to reduce or eliminate it in western Pennsylvania counties. The rabies vaccine baits will be dropped from low-flying helicopters throughout an extended 16-mile area on the western border of Erie County, which includes Albion, Springfield, Lake City, Girard and Fairview.

Rabies is a viral infection found throughout Pennsylvania that can affect the nervous system of any mammal, including humans. Rabies is almost always fatal. Rabies spreads quickly and infects large numbers of raccoons. The disease can also spread to other wildlife and pets which makes human exposure a concern.

Animals that have contact with an adequate dose of the vaccine baits develop antibodies against rabies. In the 2021 season, two vaccines will be used. The ONRAB vaccine baits are being used for the first time in Western Pennsylvania. It can be identified as a dark green blister pack with a black label on the lid and a waxy coating with a colorless liquid vaccine inside. The Raboral-V-RG vaccine bait has been utilized in Pennsylvania since 2001 and consists of pink-colored liquid vaccine in a plastic sachet that is coated with thin fishmeal or vanilla flavoring which is known to attract raccoons.

If you find rabies bait, it should be left alone. If an intact bait is found where children and pets play, it can be tossed into a fencerow, woodlot, ditch or other raccoon habitat area. Gloves or a plastic bag should be used to pick up the baits and hands should be washed after any skin contact with bait. Damaged baits should be bagged and disposed of in the trash.

If your pet eats a bait, it will not be harmed, but may vomit or have diarrhea if several baits are ingested. Confine your pet while checking the area for more bait, and avoid your pet's saliva for 24 hours after ingestion. Wash skin or wounds that may have been licked. Do not risk being bitten by taking bait away from your pet.

— MORE —

For more information about the oral raccoon rabies baiting program, contact:

- USDA Wildlife Services: 1-866-487-3297
- Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture: 1-717-783-9550
- Pennsylvania Department of Health: 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-722-6725)
- Erie County Department of Health: 1-814-451-6700

For more information about accidental human contact with baits, call Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-722-6725.

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CAPTIONS

1. Raboral-V-RG baits at top row and ONRAB baits at bottom row with quarter coin for size reference.
PHOTO CREDIT: United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services.

