

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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Raccoon rabies prevention baiting efforts in Western Erie County



Rabies vaccine baits with quarter coin for size reference.
PHOTO CREDIT: United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services.

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. The goal is to keep rabies 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 aircraft throughout an extended 16-mile area on the western border of Erie County, which includes Albion, Springfield, Lake City, Girard and Fairview. Residents of these areas are advised that there will be an increase in aircraft activity during the next few weeks.

Rabies is a viral infection that can affect the nervous system of any mammal, including humans. Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, however, it is preventable. Rabies infects raccoons, but can also spread to other wildlife and pets which makes human exposure a concern. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about 90% of reported rabies cases in the U.S. are in wildlife.

Animals that have contact with an adequate dose of the vaccine baits develop antibodies against rabies infection.

What to do if found

The vaccine bait called ONRAB and is a colorless liquid in a blister pack that has a sweet smelling, dark green, waxy coating with a black label on the lid.

If you find a 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.

Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the bait. If you find your pet has eaten a bait, confine them 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.

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

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

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

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