

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 22, 2023

MEDIA CONTACT:

Breanna Adams | Director, Environmental Health Services
badams@eriecountypa.gov | 814-451-6770

Raccoon rabies prevention baits 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 is being distributed across western Erie County by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services. 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 or other 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. Depending on the weather, baiting within Erie County should conclude this week.

Rabies is a viral infection 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.

Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the bait. Animals that have contact with an adequate dose of the vaccine baits develop antibodies against rabies.

What to do if found

The vaccine bait used is called ONRAB and is a colorless liquid vaccine 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.

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.

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

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

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

###