



County of Erie

MARK POLONCARZ
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GALE R. BURSTEIN, MD, MPH
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

HEALTH ADVISORY #308 RABIES VACCINE AIRDROP IN ERIE & NIAGARA COUNTY

AUGUST 26, 2013

Please distribute to all Public Safety Answering Points, Police Departments, Animal Control Officers and Town Officials

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
503 Kensington Avenue, Buffalo NY 14214
(716) 961-6800

Dear Police Dispatch; Animal Control Officer; Town Official,

The Erie and Niagara County Departments of Health, in a cooperative effort with the Cornell University Animal Health Diagnostic Center, the New York State Department of Health, USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, will be participating in a wildlife baiting rabies vaccination initiative to begin tentatively on August 26, 2013 and run through September 1. Rabies vaccine baits will be distributed by five fixed-wing aircraft over rural areas starting on August 26th, with a helicopter joining the force on August 28th to aid in distribution. This schedule may be adjusted slightly due to inclement weather conditions. All of Niagara County will be treated with vaccine, while the northern portion of Erie County will be included in the vaccination zone, bounded to the south (approximately) by State Route 354 and Seneca Street.

Rabies remains a very serious disease, and coordinated efforts such as this are a vital way to protect people and pets from contact with potentially rabid wildlife. In 2012, 42 animals from Erie County tested positive for rabies, predominantly raccoons but other animals as well. Vaccinating wildlife against rabies plays a vital role in decreasing the number of rabid wildlife and rabies exposures.

A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE has been set for the distribution of the rabies vaccine baits as follows:

- **August 26, 2013: Five fixed-wing aircraft arrive at Genesee County Airport in Batavia; depending on time of day, bait distribution may commence over rural areas in WNY**

- **August 27, 2013: Fixed-wing bait distribution over rural areas**
- **August 28, 2013: Helicopter arrives at Prior Aviation in Buffalo to join distribution effort; depending on time of day, bait distribution may commence over residential areas; helicopter deployment is expected to continue for 4-5 days**

The baits and vaccines used for this operation are not harmful to people, pets, or wildlife. One type of vaccine, RABORAL V-RG, is contained in brown baits comprised of fishmeal, fish oil, and wax. A newer type, ONRAB, is contained in green baits comprised of vegetable shortening, wax, icing sugar, oil, and flavoring. The ONRAB vaccine has also shown promise in vaccinating skunks against rabies. In both baits, the vaccine chamber in the center of the bait breaks open when an animal bites into the bait, resulting in an oral rabies vaccination.

The general public has been advised not to disturb the baits. If you, any member of your staff, or the general public, come into contact with the bait, wash your hands with soap and water and call 1-888-574-6656 to report the occurrence. Studies have shown that most baits are eaten within four days, and almost all baits are gone within a week. If baits are not found and eaten, they will dissolve and expose the vaccine. Sunlight and exposure to air inactivates the vaccine.

For more information, visit:

The Erie County Department of Health at <http://www2.erie.gov/health/>

The Niagara County Department of Health at <http://www.niagaracounty.com/health/Home.aspx>

The New York State Department of Health at <http://www.health.ny.gov/>

USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary

The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided on the Erie County Department of Health website is not an attempt to practice medicine and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is for informational purposes only. Always seek the advice of your personal physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of the content found on the Erie County Department of Health website or this correspondence.

The ECDOH Health Alert & Advisory System is an e-mail notification system designed to alert community partners about important health related information. You can sign up to receive alerts & advisories at <http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=node/59>.

NEW YORK
state department of
HEALTH

Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

Sue Kelly
Executive Deputy Commissioner

19 August 2013

Dear Doctor:

As in past years, a raccoon oral rabies vaccination (ORV) program will be conducted in various locations in New York State during which vaccine-laden baits are distributed by hand or aircraft in an effort to immunize raccoons against rabies. Because physicians may be consulted if someone has contact with the bait or vaccine, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is providing the following information about plans for the 2013 program, which will be conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Cornell University in Niagara, Erie, Wyoming, Chautauqua, Oswego, Lewis, Jefferson, St Lawrence, Essex, Clinton, Franklin, Nassau, and Suffolk counties between August 20th and September 2nd. **Please note that this year the experimental ONRAB vaccine will be used in field trials in all of the above counties.**

As in prior years all areas will be baited using the Raboral V-RG bait, which contains a liquid vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein (V-RG) recombinant virus vaccine. The bait, either coated sachets similar to a condiment packet coated with fishmeal or a 2-inch fishmeal polymer block, is designed to be attractive to raccoons and it is unlikely that humans would eat the bait. The V-RG vaccine contains a highly attenuated live vaccinia virus that expresses the surface glycoprotein from the rabies virus. The vaccine cannot cause rabies but would elicit an immune response in people just as human smallpox vaccines would.

Field trials that were begun in 2012 in Clinton and Essex counties using the ONRAB vaccine will now be expanded to all of the ORV areas of New York. ONRAB has been used in Canada for years to vaccinate raccoons against rabies. The bait is a plastic blister pack coated with a fat/wax attractant. The bait packet is approximately 1 in. x 1.5 in. and dyed green. The ONRAB vaccine is a live, attenuated human adenovirus Type 5 vector that has been modified to express the rabies glycoprotein gene. Like V-RG the vaccine cannot cause rabies.

Exposure to either vaccine virus could occur by consuming the bait, by handling partially consumed baits, or by being licked or bitten by an animal that recently consumed a bait. Fortunately, both vaccines are quite safe based on field trials and prior experience with application in the field.

Exposure to V-RG vaccine contained in ORV baits may cause skin lesions similar to those caused by smallpox vaccination, and may similarly be spread person to person through contact with such lesions. Two cases of human infection with this vaccine virus have been reported (Rupprecht, C.E., et al, *N Engl J Med*, Vol 345, No. 8, Aug 23, 2001, pp. 582-6 and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Vol 58, No. 43, Nov 13, 2009, pp. 1204-8).

Exposure to ONRAB may cause a cold-like infection in people who come into contact with the liquid vaccine through mucous membranes or broken skin. Symptoms that may develop include a fever, sore throat, and headache (typical cold-like symptoms). Most adults have been exposed to adenoviruses during childhood, as adenoviruses are common and often cause asymptomatic respiratory infections.

If you have a patient who has handled the bait or vaccine, or reports being bitten by their pet after the pet ingested all or part of a bait, please contact your local health department.

Additional information about rabies and the ORV program is available on the United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services website at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml . You may contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 if you have questions. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important public health effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DKuhles', written in a cursive style.

Daniel J. Kuhles, MD
Director
Bureau of Communicable Disease Control

19 August 2013

Dear Veterinarian:

As in past years, a raccoon oral rabies vaccination (ORV) program will be conducted in various locations in New York State during which vaccine-laden baits are distributed by hand or aircraft in an effort to immunize raccoons against rabies. Because veterinarians may be consulted if a person or their pets have contact with the bait or vaccine, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is providing the following information about plans for the 2013 program, which will be conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Cornell University in Niagara, Erie, Wyoming, Chautauqua, Oswego, Lewis, Jefferson, St Lawrence, Essex, Clinton, Franklin, Nassau, and Suffolk counties between August 20th and September 2nd. **Please note that this year the experimental ONRAB vaccine will be used in field trials in all of the above counties.**

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Exposure to either vaccine virus could occur by consuming the bait, by handling partially consumed baits, or by being licked or bitten by an animal that recently consumed a bait. Fortunately, both vaccines are quite safe based on field trials and prior experience with application in the field.

Exposure to V-RG vaccine contained in ORV baits may cause skin lesions similar to those caused by smallpox vaccination, and may similarly be spread person to person through contact with such lesions. Two cases of human infection with this vaccine virus have been reported (Rupprecht, C.E., et al, *N Engl J Med*, Vol 345, No. 8, Aug 23, 2001, pp. 582-6 and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Vol 58, No. 43, Nov 13, 2009, pp. 1204-8).

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If you have a client who has handled the bait or vaccine, who reports their pet ingested part or all of a bait, or who reports being bitten by their pet after the pet ingested all or part of a bait, please contact your local health department.

Additional information about rabies and the ORV program is available on the United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services website at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml . You may contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 if you have questions. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important public health effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan Cherry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Bryan Cherry, VMD, PhD
State Public Health Veterinarian
Bureau of Communicable Disease Control