

# For Health Professionals

## Health Alerts

### Health Alert #20 - Rabies Vaccination - 08/27/2002

Please note the following letter disseminated to law enforcement agencies and the medical community regarding rabies vaccination in New York State and Erie County.

Finances supported by USDA APHIS Wildlife Services and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources have been appropriated for the continuation and expansion of the wildlife rabies vaccination program in New York State, including Erie County. Baits containing a USDA-licensed vaccine will be broadly distributed in the environment to immunize raccoons against the raccoon strain of rabies virus. A localized infection in the tonsil, for up to 48 hours, will facilitate an immune response in the animal after successful ingestion of the vaccine contained within the baits. As a result, the raccoons will be protected against subsequent rabies infection following natural exposure to the disease. Once the disease is suppressed in the primary wildlife vector species, human and domestic animal exposures to the deadly virus are also reduced.

This correspondence is to provide you with information about the vaccine program, as well as facts relating to vaccine safety. This will enable you to advise your patients if they come in contact with the baits, vaccine or animals.

Vaccine-laden baits may be delivered by hand and helicopter in large residential areas, and by fixed-wing aircraft in rural environments. The first phase of the airdrop, which will be conducted over the rural areas of Erie County, has been scheduled over the upcoming Labor Day Weekend. The second phase will run during September 10-12, at which point a helicopter will be used to drop bait along the lakeshore, rail, power lines and stream corridors in residential areas of the county. Please note that this schedule may change if weather conditions delay the aircraft schedule in other parts of Canada and the New England area.

The baits are not harmful to people, pets or wildlife. The bait matrix consists of fishmeal and fish oil. The vaccine is contained in small, plastic-bag sachet, in the center of each bait. Each labeled bait contains approximately 2mls of the rabies vaccine.

The baits are distasteful; it is not likely that they would be consumed if they were picked up by a person in the field. Nevertheless, the possibility does exist for potential vaccine exposure via bait consumption, or through dermal exposure while handling a punctured vaccine chamber. It is also conceivable that vaccine exposure might occur if a person was bitten by an animal that had recently consumed a bait. Again, there is no danger under these circumstances.

Raboral V-RG is an attenuated RNA sequence rabies virus oral vaccine. This technology completely eliminates the risk of rabies infection as a result of vaccination with Raboral V-RG. Likewise the vaccinia carrier in the vaccine is attenuated to a level where it is asymptomatic and non-communicable.

Human and domestic animal contacts with baits and vaccine continue to be monitored in the United States. Accordingly, the baits are labeled with a 1/800 phone number.

If your patient comes in contact with the bait and/or vaccine, please notify the Program at (1-877-722-6725). The necessary paperwork pertaining to the contact will be completed and further medical procedures may be recommended if vaccine contact has occurred.

Note: Website also has links to the vaccine manufacturer (Merial) and the CDC

Please contact the Erie County Health Department, Bureau of Environmental Health (716) 858-6089 with any questions.