

# For Health Professionals

## Health Alerts

### Health Advisory #89 - Rabies Vaccination Program - July 19, 2004

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, once again 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 advisory 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. Baits will be delivered across Erie County on July 27-28, 2004, and again around August 20, 2004 via fixed-winged aircraft. These dates are approximations since aircraft flight is limited by weather conditions.

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 a person in the field picked them up. 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 an animal that had recently consumed a bait bit a person. 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.

For further questions, feel free to contact the Erie County Department of Environmental Health at 716-858-7677.