



## Department of Health

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.**  
Commissioner

**SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.**  
Executive Deputy Commissioner

9 August 2016

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 2016 program, which will be conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Cornell University in Niagara, Erie, Oswego, Lewis, Jefferson, St Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton and Essex counties between August 9<sup>th</sup> and September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Field trials that were begun in 2012 in Clinton and Essex counties using the ONRAB vaccine were expanded to all of the ORV areas of New York during 2013. Post-baiting surveillance has demonstrated that the ONRAB baits are effective at immunizing raccoons against rabies. Therefore the ONRAB field trials will continue during 2016. 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.

The Raboral V-RG bait, which contains a liquid vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein (V-RG) recombinant virus vaccine, will be used in limited areas of Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties. 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.

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 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.

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).

**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://goo.gl/VpO7mR>. 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 dark ink that reads "Andie Newman, DVM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andie Newman, DVM, MPH, DACVPM  
State Public Health Veterinarian