



Jefferson County PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Public Health Facility, 531 Meade Street, Watertown, New York 13601

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ANNUAL RABIES VACCINE BAIT PROGRAM TO TARGET RACCOONS

Watertown, NY – August 07, 2015 ~The Wildlife Services program of the United States Department of Agriculture will be distributing oral rabies bait across Jefferson County and the North Country beginning the week of August 11th to vaccinate raccoons and help stop the further spread of rabies. Rabies is a serious public health and agricultural concern. This will be done through both aerial baiting with low flying aircraft and hand baiting in specific areas.

Aerial baiting is scheduled to begin the week of August 11th. Hand baiting will begin the following week and continue until completed. Distribution of baits is weather-dependent and inclement weather may result in extended bait distributions. Each vaccine-containing bait consists of a plastic blister pack. To make the baits attractive, the blister packs are coated with a sweet attractant that includes vegetable-based fats, wax, icing sugar, vegetable oil, artificial marshmallow flavor, and dark-green food-grade dye. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the bait. However, people who encounter baits directly are asked to leave the bait undisturbed.

Follow these simple directions if you find a rabies bait:

- Anyone who finds the bait should leave it untouched, unless it is discovered on a lawn or driveway.
- If intact baits are found in areas frequented by pets or children, pick up with paper towel/gloves and toss them into brushy or forested cover.
- If the blister packet containing the vaccine breaks the liquid vaccine should be visible. Use gloves to place the bait in a plastic bag. Cover the bait with 1:10 dilution of household bleach, and wipe down affected areas with bleach solution. Place cleaning materials in a bag, and dispose of the bag in regular garbage.
- If you have contact with any bait, wash with soap and water. **Contact the phone number on the bait or call Jefferson County Public Health Service at 786-3720 for further guidance.**
- Instruct children to leave the baits alone.
- Do not attempt to take baits away from your pet; you may be bitten. The bait is not harmful to your pet. If by chance numerous baits are consumed, your pet may develop an upset stomach. If your pet ingests a bait, avoid getting the pet's saliva into your eyes, mucous membranes or on skin lesions for 24 hours.

Rabies, a viral disease, is found mainly in raccoons, foxes, bats and skunks that can infect domestic animals and people as well. The virus can spread through the bite or contact with saliva from an infected animal. Rabies vaccine – if given soon after a human is bitten by a rabid animal – is highly effective. Once the signs and symptoms of rabies start to appear, there is no treatment and the disease is almost always fatal. If exposures to the virus are not treated it is almost always fatal. Costs associated with detection, prevention and control of rabies exceeds \$300 million annually. Economic studies estimate the return on investment for oral vaccination programs could be as high as \$8 for every dollar spent. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 90 percent of reported rabies cases in the United States are in wildlife.

Always notify your medical provider or JCPHS if you are bitten by a pet or wild animal. It is also essential for people to make sure their pets are up to date with their rabies vaccinations. Look for information about rabies clinics at www.jcphs.org.

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