



## Jefferson County PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

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

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### Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ANNUAL RABIES VACCINE BAIT PROGRAM TO TARGET RACCOONS

**Watertown, NY – August 21, 2013** ~The Wildlife Services program of the United States Department of Agriculture will be distributing oral rabies bait across Jefferson County to vaccinate raccoons and help stop the further spread of rabies. This will be done through both aerial baiting with low flying aircraft and hand baiting.

Aerial baiting is scheduled to begin this week. Hand baiting with the block-type baits will begin next 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 sachet containing the vaccine and is covered with a fish-meal polymer to attract animals.

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, toss them using gloves or paper towels into brushy or forested cover. Damaged baits can be disposed of in trash using a paper towel or gloves.
- If you have contact with any bait, wash with soap and water. Contact the phone number on the bait or call **1-888-574-6656**.
- 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.

Rabies is a serious public health concern. Rabies is a viral disease 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. 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. For more information about rabies, visit [www.jcphs.org](http://www.jcphs.org).

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