



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

246 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

614/466-3543
www.odh.ohio.gov

Ted Strickland/Governor

Alvin D. Jackson, M.D./Director of Health

Dear Colleagues:

RE: Fall Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) Operation

Beginning Friday, August 29, 2008, the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services Program, in conjunction with local health departments (LHDs) and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), Agriculture (ODA) and Natural Resources (ODNR) will begin distributing Raboral V-RG, an oral rabies vaccine for wild raccoons. With good weather and no delays, we anticipate aerial operations will be completed in about 10 days. Ground crews may be distributing baits in urban areas through October 3. In addition to the historically treated areas in eastern Ohio, target areas in Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Summit and Portage counties will also be baited.

Two different vaccine laden baits will be used. Most will be coated sachet baits. With this formulation, the vaccine is contained in a white ketchup packet that is rolled in brown fishmeal crumbles. These coated sachets will be dropped from twin engine white aircraft. Ground, vehicle, and helicopter crews will be distributing a different vaccine form, the fishmeal polymer bait. It has a similar vaccine packet, but the packet is stuffed inside a 2x2 inch hard brown block. The block is made of fishmeal, fish oil, and a synthetic binder, with 100 mg of tetracycline hydrochloride added as a biomarker.

Raboral V-RG is a recombinant vaccine containing the rabies glycoprotein antigen which is bound to a live vaccinia virus vector (carrier). The vaccinia carrier is much weaker than what is used in smallpox vaccines. Raboral V-RG was extensively tested for animal and environmental safety and is USDA-approved for oral vaccination of raccoons. Although considered safe, there was one incident where a person had a localized skin infection linked to the vaccine. The chances for such an incident to occur is considered remote in that over 88 million doses have been distributed in the U.S. and Europe with no other reported incidents. However, since this occurred once, it should be noted that a pregnant person or a person with eczema or an immune suppressed state, may be at risk, especially if vaccine is introduced into a wound/scarified skin without a thorough cleaning and disinfection. Physicians should be alert for papules or vesicles at the site of exposure, with possible local erythema and regional lymph node involvement.

Patients or clients may call you concerning ORV bait they or their pet has found. Please inform them of the following:

- Do not attempt removal of an ORV bait from an animal's mouth, as you could be bitten. Eating these baits will not harm your pet.
- Confine your pet and look for other baits in the area. These baits should be removed from where your pet could eat them.
- Wear gloves or use a towel when you pick up a bait. Although there is no harm in touching an undamaged bait, they have a strong fishmeal smell. Gloves or a towel will also protect your hands if you have any small cuts.
- Wash your hands and any exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water if there is any chance that the vaccine sachet has been ruptured and exposed the skin.
- Advise people who had skin or mucous membrane contact with the red vaccine liquid, and who also have eczema, are under 18 years of age, and/or pregnant or immune-compromised, to seek medical attention if they experience any rash or redness within 14 days of the exposure.

If you receive questions, or in the event of human or pet contact with the bait/vaccine, call your LHD or the ODH Zoonoses Information line at 1-888-722-4371 or (614) 752-1029. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important public health effort.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Smith, DVM, MPH
State Public Health Veterinarian

Forrest Smith, MD
State Epidemiologist