

Ohio Department of Health Appalachian Ridge Oral Rabies Vaccination Program – May 2008

Background Rabies is a viral disease that affects animals and people and is still virtually 100 percent fatal. Raccoon-rabies variant (RRV) is of particular public health concern because it can infect domestic animals and people. Ohio's effort to keep raccoon rabies from spreading throughout Ohio began in 1997. A new vaccine that could be eaten by wild animals was used to create a barrier of immunized raccoons along Ohio's borders with Pennsylvania and West Virginia. This strategy was very successful and in subsequent years many other states including Pennsylvania and West Virginia also began programs. This multi-state effort, coordinated by the United States Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, is called the Appalachian Ridge Oral Rabies Vaccination Program. Other cooperators involved in the Ohio effort include the Ohio departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture, The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Dynamic Aviation and local health departments (LHDs).

In July 2004, RRV-infected raccoons were discovered west of the immune barrier in Lake, Geauga and Cuyahoga counties. Aggressive surveillance and testing of raccoons to define the extent of the outbreak was initiated. Within three weeks, an emergency rabies vaccine baiting was conducted to halt further spread. For continued control and elimination of RRV, vaccine-laden baits are being distributed in the spring and fall in this newly infected area.

Procedures Oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits will be distributed in five Ohio counties to prevent further spread of RRV. Baits will be dispersed across all of Lake and Geauga counties; east of I-77 in Cuyahoga County; north of I-80 in Portage County; and the northern half of Summit County. Most of the baits will be delivered by a specially equipped helicopter or white Beechcraft King Air airplane. They will fly low and slow along north-south flight lines that are about 0.5 miles apart. LHDs will coordinate ground teams and will use vehicles to distribute baits in urban and suburban areas.

Start Date Baiting will begin on May 1. Aerial baiting in rural areas should take three to four days, weather permitting. Vehicle and ground distribution of ORV baits in urban and suburban neighborhoods is expected to take about 21 days, from May 1 to May 23, but may be extended a day or more depending on the weather. The base of operations is Youngstown-Elser Metro Airport in North Lima, Ohio.

Bait and Distribution Two vaccine-laden bait products will be used. A white airplane will drop a small brown plastic sachet, about the size of a ketchup packet, in rural areas. In urban areas, where baits will be distributed from vehicles or helicopter, the sachet will be inside a brown 2-x-2-inch fishmeal block. There will be a total of 367,200 pieces of bait distributed over 1,121 square miles.

**For more information call 1-888-722-4371
or visit the ODH Zoonotic Disease Program Web site at:**

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/idc/zoodis/orv/orv1.aspx>