

PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

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Portage County Raccoon Rabies Vaccine Baiting Slated for August 20th

The Portage County Health Department, in conjunction with the Ohio Departments of Health and Natural Resources, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services program, will conduct its fall oral rabies raccoon vaccination operation in the cities of Aurora and Streetsboro on Wednesday, August 20th.

This operation is part of a National Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) program, which has been conducted in Ohio and other states since 1997. Vaccinating raccoons along Ohio's eastern border has successfully slowed the spread of Raccoon Rabies Variant (RRV) into Ohio from Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The Portage County Health Department conducts this operation once each year.

Portage County Health Department Environmental Services employees will manually distribute the vaccine. The vaccine will be distributed in two rabies vaccine formulations: 1) Raboral V-RG, which is contained in a white plastic sachet and 2) ONRAB, which is contained in a blister pack covered in a waxy green coating. Both baits will have a fishy smell. Residents should avoid the baits and keep pets confined during the baiting period. In particular, dogs are attracted to the baits and will occasionally eat them. The baits are not harmful to pets. Most of the baits disappear within 24 hours; however it is important that raccoons have every opportunity to eat them.

Portage County Health Department Environmental Services employees make every effort to throw baits into deep brush and wooded areas. If baits are found in areas frequented by pets or children, toss the baits into a remote area that is frequented by raccoons. Anyone handling baits should wear gloves or use a paper towel. If a person's skin is exposed to the vaccine, thoroughly wash hands with soap and water.

Between August 25th and September 5th, vaccine will also be dropped from low-flying U.S. Department of Agriculture airplanes. The air-dropped vaccine is in a dark green, sweet-smelling, waxy-coated blister pack approximately 1 by 2 inches in size.

Rabies is a viral disease that affects animals and people and is still virtually 100 percent fatal. The rabies virus is found in the saliva of infected animals. Raccoons, skunks and bats are most often responsible for reported cases of rabies, but foxes and coyotes also commonly transmit the disease. It is spread by a bite or a scratch. The best way to protect your family from rabies is to avoid contact with wild animals and animals that you don't know, and to vaccinate your pets against rabies and keep them current with their shots. If bitten, call your doctor. Call your veterinarian if your pet has contact with a wild animal. Rabies exposures in Portage County should be reported to the Portage County Health Department, 330-296-9919.

Questions about baiting and vaccine exposures may be directed to the ODH information hotline, 1-888-722-4371.

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