

PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

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Portage County Raccoon Rabies Vaccine Baiting Slated for August 24th through September 24th

The Portage County Health Department, in conjunction with the Ohio departments of Health (ODH) 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 vaccination operation starting on Tuesday, August 24th. Weather permitting, ODH aerial baiting will begin in Mantua, Hiram and Nelson on August 24th and should be complete within 10 days. The Portage County Health Department will throw baits on foot and from vehicles in Streetsboro and Aurora on August 31st.

Locally, vaccine distribution also takes place in Ashtabula, Jefferson, Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana counties; Belmont, Carroll, Harrison and Monroe counties; Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga and Summit Counties.

Two types of baits will be used. Airplanes will drop a small plastic envelope, about the size of a ketchup packet, coated in fishmeal. Portage County Health Department Environmental Services employees will use a 2x2-inch fishmeal block. 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 deeper cover. Anyone handling baits should wear gloves. If a person's skin is exposed to the vaccine (appears as a red liquid), thoroughly wash the area with soap and water.

“This local, state and federal partnership is an example of our continued efforts to protect and improve the health of all Ohioans,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. “You can help us prevent the spread of the raccoon rabies variant by avoiding the baits and working with your veterinarian to vaccinate your pets.”

The rabies virus is found in the saliva of infected animals, most often raccoons, skunks and bats. 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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