

PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

Portage County Administration Building
449 South Meridian Street, Ravenna, Ohio 44266
Ravenna, Ohio 44266

DuWayne O. Porter, M.P.H., R.S.
Health Commissioner

Phone Area Code 330-296-9919

Fax: Area Code 330-297-3597

E-mail: pchd@portageoco.com

Web: www.co.portage.oh.us/dept/health



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Media Contact:
Becky Lehman

Portage County Raccoon Rabies Vaccine Baiting Slated for September 7th

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, September 7, 2011.

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 twice each year.

"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 Ted Wymyslo. "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."

Portage County Health Department Environmental Services employees will manually distribute the vaccine which is enclosed in a 2x2-inch brown cube bait that has 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 (appears as a red liquid), thoroughly wash hands with soap and water.

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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