



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

246 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

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

John R. Kasich / Governor

Theodore E. Wymyslo, M.D. / Director of Health

Dear Colleagues:

Beginning Monday, May 2, 2011, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Wildlife Services Program, in conjunction with several Ohio local health departments (LHDs), the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) will begin distributing Raboral V-RG, an oral rabies vaccine (ORV) for wild raccoons. Target areas for rabies-vaccine bait distribution include all of Lake and Geauga counties, northern Summit and Portage counties, and eastern Cuyahoga County. With good weather and no delays, we anticipate helicopter and ground distribution of the baits to be completed by May 20, 2011.

The vaccine is contained in a white vaccine sachet that is enclosed within a two-by-two inch hard block. The block is brown in color and 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 the vaccinia virus 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 the vaccine is considered safe, we are aware of two human exposures that resulted in localized skin infections. The chance for another such incident to occur is considered remote. Over 150 million doses have been distributed in the U.S. and Europe with no other reported incidents. However, since two incidents have occurred in the past, it should be noted that a pregnant woman or a person with eczema or an immune-suppressed state may be at risk for infection from the vaccine carrier, especially if the vaccine is introduced into a wound or scarified skin and no attempts are made to wash and disinfectant the skin after contact with the bait. 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 that they or their pet has found. Please inform them of the following:

- Do not attempt to remove 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 the area where your pet could find them and 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 its contents have gotten on exposed 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.

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

Mary DiOrio, MD, MPH
Acting State Epidemiologist
Medical Director, Division of Prevention