



M A R Y L A N D

County Executive John R. Leopold

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Douglas L. Hart
Acting Health Officer

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COUNTY COUNCIL

July 28, 2011

The Honorable Dick Ladd
Anne Arundel County Council
P. O. Box 2700
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Chairman Ladd:

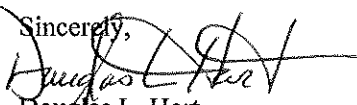
The Anne Arundel County Department of Health will conduct the annual Raccoon Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) Project in September. Bait distribution will begin on Wednesday, September 7, and should be completed by the end of September, weather permitting. The objective of the project is to reduce the occurrence of rabid terrestrial animals by placing baits containing an oral rabies vaccine for raccoons. Immunizing raccoons, the primary source of rabies in our County, will help to reduce rabies in other terrestrial animals. Consequently, fewer people and their pets should be exposed to rabid animals.

Since 1998, the Department of Health has implemented the successful ORV Project. Baits containing the oral vaccine have been distributed on the Annapolis Peninsula for 13 years and on Gibson Island, at the request of the Gibson Island Corporation, for 11 years. With support from the Maryland office of Wildlife Services, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the project was expanded to include the Broadneck Peninsula in 2001 and to cover the entire County in 2003. These campaigns were well received by the public and were accomplished without problems.

The vaccine consists of the vaccinia virus into which a piece of the rabies virus has been inserted. It cannot cause rabies and is not harmful to pets or other animals. Millions of doses of Raboral V-RG have been used in Europe and the U.S. without serious human health effects. The Department of Health distributes two styles of baits. One looks like a small brown brick. The other looks like a light brown condiment packet. Both contain the same type of liquid rabies vaccine and smell like fish. People who come in contact with the bait or have a pet that finds the bait are asked to call the Department of Health. Each bait is marked with a toll-free telephone number.

Specially trained Department of Health staff will place baits by hand in densely populated locations where raccoons may live near people, such as wooded residential areas. The bait teams will be clearly identified by wearing orange or green Department of Health T-shirts and by traveling in marked County vehicles. The County Police helicopter will be used to distribute the bait in less densely populated areas. Baits are placed at a rate of 1 bait per 3.3 acres of pervious surfaces, which means not every property will be baited. Homeowners who have seen raccoons on their property may request to have their property baited by calling the Department at 410-222-7168 or submitting a request online at www.aahealth.org before August 26.

Enclosed is a fact sheet that describes the project in more detail. Information is also available at www.aahealth.org. If you have any questions about the project, please contact me at 410-222-7375 or Kyle Shannon, Oral Rabies Vaccination Project Coordinator, at 410-222-7168.

Sincerely,

Douglas L. Hart
Acting Health Officer

Enclosure

Health Matters

Raccoon Oral Rabies Vaccination Project

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health, along with Wildlife Services of the United States Department of Agriculture, will begin its annual Raccoon Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) Project on **September 7, 2011**. Completion should occur by the end of September, weather permitting. The goal of the project is to immunize thousands of wild raccoons by placing baits containing rabies vaccine throughout Anne Arundel County. This year, approximately 70,000 baits will be spread throughout Anne Arundel County. Immunizing the raccoon population helps to reduce the number of rabid animals and the human and pet exposures to rabies.

In 2010, Anne Arundel County reported 14 cases of terrestrial (ground dwelling) animal rabies. This is considerably less than the 71 reported in 1998 and 96 in 1997. This decrease is partly due to the success of the ORV Project on the Annapolis Peninsula, which began in October 1998. The project added the Broadneck Peninsula in 2001, and it expanded to cover the entire County in 2003.

The Public Health Concern

Rabies is a significant public health threat since rabid animals can come in contact with people and their pets. Rabies is a fatal viral infection. While pets can be vaccinated against rabies, people exposed to rabies must undergo a costly series of shots to protect themselves from the disease.

In 1997, the U.S. Department of Agriculture licensed a safe vaccine for use with raccoons. This vaccine has been used successfully in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, and in more than 10 other states to control raccoon rabies.

Vaccine Distribution Plan

There are two bait versions that are distributed. One (made of fishmeal and polymers) looks like a small brown brick. It is approximately 0.75 inch thick by 1.25 inches square and contains a small plastic bag of the liquid rabies vaccine, Raboral V-RG. The raccoon must bite into the bag to be vaccinated. The second is similar to a condiment packet (such as ketchup), which has been coated with a waxy fishmeal attractant for raccoons. Inside the packet is the liquid rabies vaccine. The raccoon must bite into the packet to be vaccinated.

Baits will be placed by hand in likely raccoon habitats in Anne Arundel County neighborhoods. The bait teams will wear orange or green Department of Health T-shirts and will travel in marked County vehicles. In addition, the Anne Arundel County Police helicopter will be distributing baits in less populated areas and may be flying at low altitudes during the distribution.

The Vaccine

Raboral V-RG, a genetically engineered vaccine, contains a live vaccinia virus into which a small portion of the rabies virus has been inserted. It **cannot** cause rabies. It has been proven effective in immunizing raccoons and coyotes, and it has been shown to cause no harmful effects in more than 50 different species of birds and mammals, **including dogs and cats.**

From a human safety standpoint, Raboral V-RG is felt to represent a low risk. Millions of doses have been distributed in the U.S., Canada and Europe with only two reported cases of human infection due to vaccine contact. Both individuals made a full recovery. Although complications are rare, it is recommended that people who are younger than 18 years old or pregnant or who have an immunodeficiency or a chronic skin condition avoid handling the bait. It is also recommended that care be taken in removing the bait from a pet's mouth.

Questions and Answers

What if I find a bait near my home?

Leave it alone. If you don't want the bait near your home, use gloves or put a plastic bag over your hands to pick it up and toss it into the woods. Then, wash your hands. Bare hand contact with the bait alone is not a concern; however, it does have a strong fish odor, so hand washing is still recommended.

What if my child picks up the bait?

If the vaccine packet or bag is not ruptured, then wash your child's hands with plenty of soap and water to help get rid of the fishy odor.

What if my child tears the vaccine packet or eats the bait?

It is not possible to get rabies from the vaccine. The offensive odor usually discourages a child from eating the bait. However, in the unlikely event your child bites into the packet or bag containing the vaccine or otherwise has direct contact with the vaccine liquid, you should contact your child's physician and notify the Department of Health at 410-222-7168 for any follow-up action.

What if my dog, cat or ferret eats the bait?

The bait and vaccine are not harmful to animals including dogs, cats, ferrets, livestock and wildlife. The bait may cause diarrhea or vomiting in dogs, cats or ferrets due to the high fat content of the bait.

What if my pet brings the bait into the house?

Placement of baits will begin on September 7 and will be completed by the end of September. During this time and for at least two additional weeks, it is recommended that pets be kept indoors or on leashes outside. This will allow enough time for raccoons to eat the bait. If your pet does find the bait, discard the bait in the trash. Wear rubber gloves or put a plastic bag over your hands when discarding. Wash your hands after handling the bait and report any contact with the vaccine liquid to the Department of Health at 410-222-7168.

Can this vaccine be used to vaccinate my dog or cat against rabies?

No, the vaccine is approved only for use in raccoons. You should have your dog, cat or ferret vaccinated by your veterinarian or at a public anti-rabies clinic offered by Anne Arundel County Animal Control. The law requires pets to be vaccinated against rabies.

Can I request that baits be placed on my property?

Yes. If raccoons are present in your area, you can request that baits be placed on your property online at www.aahealth.org or by calling 410-222-7168 by August 26.

Why is the project being carried out in the late summer/early fall?

This is a time when the baby raccoons are old enough to gather their own food; thus, there is the possibility of reaching the largest number of raccoons with the bait. Although raccoons do not hibernate, they are less active during cold weather.

After this project is carried out, do I still have to worry about rabies in the area?

Yes. The Department of Health cannot ensure that all raccoons are vaccinated. Raccoons or other animals with rabies could enter the area after the baiting; however, the incidence of rabies should be greatly reduced.

For more information, call the Bureau of Environmental Health, 410-222-7168.