



April 13, 2019

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

Wildlife Services

P.O. Box 130  
Moseley, VA 23120

(804) 739-7739  
(804) 739-7738 fax

Dear Cooperator:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Wildlife Services program (WS) will conduct an emergency spring oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait distribution program in southwestern Virginia to vaccinate raccoons against the rabies virus. Bait distribution in Virginia is part of a nationwide, cooperative effort by USDA to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies in the eastern United States. Implementation of this program in Virginia is a cooperative effort between USDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health, and other state agencies.

The spring baiting campaign is being conducted in response to two rabies-positive raccoons reported in 2017 from the Big Stone Gap area of Wise County, VA, where rabies was not previously detected. Beginning on or about May 14, 2019, approximately 355,000 coated sachet baits containing the oral rabies vaccine will be distributed across a 608 square-mile bait zone in parts of Lee, Wise, and Scott Counties including the communities of Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Dryden, Duffield, Norton, and Wise. Baits will be distributed by low-flying fixed wing airplanes and a helicopter. The aerial bait drop is expected to last for about 1 week. This effort will be repeated in October 2019 as part of a larger rabies baiting project.

As the oral rabies vaccination baits are aurally distributed, a navigator controls the bait machine and turns off the machine as necessary to avoid dropping baits on roadways, structures, large bodies of water, etc. The ORV baits which will be distributed are RABORAL V-RG® coated sachets. The coated sachet is a plastic packet of vaccine coated with a sticky, fish-scented substance to attract raccoons. Each bait is marked with a toll-free number (1-877-722-6725) for people to call for assistance or information if they find or come in contact with a bait.



Oral Rabies Vaccine baits, coated sachet



Safeguarding American Agriculture

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Federal Relay Service  
(Voice/TTY/ASCII/Spanish)  
1-800-877-8339

We recommend the following precautions in case ORV baits are found by persons or pets:

- If your pet finds an ORV bait, do not attempt to remove the bait from your pet's mouth, as you could be bitten. Eating the baits will not harm your pet.
- Confine your pet and look for other baits in the area. These baits should be removed from areas where your pet could eat them.
- Instruct children to leave baits alone.
- Wear gloves or use a towel when you pick up the bait. Although there is no harm in touching an undamaged bait, they have a strong fishmeal smell. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water if there is any chance that the vaccine sachet has been ruptured.
- If a person or pet is exposed to the vaccine contained within the bait, call the toll-free number on the bait (1-877-722-6725) to report the bait contact.

Please contact the USDA at 804-739-7739 if you have any questions about the Wildlife Services Oral Rabies Vaccination Program. Enclosed is a map of the 2019 spring bait distribution zone relative to the historic baiting area. Additional information is also available from the website: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/rabies>

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important public health effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Wilhelm".

Eric Wilhelm  
Wildlife Biologist  
USDA-Wildlife Services  
[Eric.S.Wilhelm@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Eric.S.Wilhelm@aphis.usda.gov)