



**Animal and Plant  
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# News Release

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## **USDA Continues Field Trials in 5 States of New Oral Rabies Vaccine for Use in Raccoons, Other Wildlife**

WASHINGTON, Aug. 9, 2013 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will conduct a third U.S. field trial of a vaccine to control rabies in raccoons, skunks, and other wildlife beginning this month. The environmental assessment process leading to the expansion was approved in 2012 and 2013.

The field trial by APHIS' Wildlife Services (WS) program again will distribute more than one million oral rabies vaccination (ORV) baits in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, and West Virginia to test the safety and immune effects of the ONRAB vaccine for potential use in wildlife. The ONRAB vaccine is currently used in Canada to control rabies in raccoons, skunks and foxes. The vaccine was field tested in the United States for the first time in West Virginia during 2011, and promising results warranted expanded testing of the vaccine in five states during 2012. The 2013 proposed field trials will repeat the 2012 studies conducted to evaluate potential annual variation and include a small expansion for evaluation in New York.

WS works cooperatively with local, state and federal governments, universities and other partners to reduce the prevalence of rabies in wildlife by distributing ORV bait in targeted areas. The bait currently used in ORV programs has proven to be effective in raccoons, coyotes, and foxes, although it has not produced sufficient levels of immunity to begin to eliminate raccoon rabies and has not proven to be effective in skunks.

“Skunks infected with the raccoon rabies virus may be helping to perpetuate and maintain the raccoon rabies virus in the environment,” notes Richard Chipman, Coordinator for the WS National Rabies Management Program. “If the ONRAB bait can be applied to successfully vaccinate skunks as well as increase the vaccination rate in raccoons and maintain the rates in foxes and coyotes, it could greatly improve the overall effectiveness of our rabies control programs.”

WS personnel will sample raccoons and skunks in the study areas both prior to and immediately following bait distribution to determine vaccination rates. The field trials are a collaborative effort among APHIS-WS, APHIS-Center for Veterinary Biologics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the vaccine manufacturer (Artemis Technologies, Guelph, Ontario, Canada), the Global

Alliance for Rabies Control, and state departments of agriculture, health and human resources, and natural resources.

- In the northeastern U.S., the 2013 field trial will take place within a study area approximately 6,236.5 mi<sup>2</sup> in size and spanning portions of Clinton, Essex, Erie, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, Niagara, St. Lawrence, and Wyoming counties, NY; Addison, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Orleans, Lamoille, Caledonia, Chittenden, and Washington counties, VT; and Coos and Grafton counties, New Hampshire.
- In Ohio, the study will cover 939 mi<sup>2</sup> including 433 mi<sup>2</sup> covered by ground and helicopter baiting. ONRAB baits will be distributed in portions of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Portage and Summit counties.
- The ONRAB vaccine field trial in southeastern West Virginia will encompass 904 mi<sup>2</sup> in portions of Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Pocahontas, Raleigh, and Summers counties.



The ONRAB bait consists of a blister pack, containing the vaccine. To make the baits attractive, the blister packs containing the vaccine are coated with a sweet attractant that includes vegetable-based fats, wax, icing sugar, vegetable oil, artificial marshmallow flavor, and dark-green food-grade dye. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the bait, but are asked to leave the bait undisturbed if they encounter it. If contact with bait occurs, the contact area should be immediately rinsed with warm water and soap.

The cooperative WS National Rabies Management Program was established in 1997 to prevent the spread of wildlife rabies in the United States by containing and eventually eliminating the virus in terrestrial mammals and focuses efforts on controlling rabies in the raccoon, gray fox and coyote.

Rabies is a serious public health concern. If exposures to the virus are not treated it is almost always fatal. Costs associated with detection, prevention and control of rabies exceeds \$300 million annually. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 90 percent of reported rabies cases in the United States are in wildlife.

For additional information concerning rabies or the ORV program, please visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/oral\\_rabies/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml) or contact WS toll free at 1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).

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