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USDA Begins 2023 Oral Rabies Vaccine Efforts in Eastern United States

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WASHINGTON, August 4, 2023— The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will begin its annual distribution of RABORAL V-RG®, an oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait, in select areas in the eastern United States to prevent the spread of raccoon rabies into America’s heartland.

Rabies is a serious public health concern. While rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, it also is 100% preventable. Human exposures can be successfully remedied if medical attention is sought immediately following exposure. Costs associated with rabies detection, prevention and control may exceed \$500 million annually in the United States. According to the CDC, about 90 percent of reported rabies cases in the U.S. are in wildlife.

APHIS’ Wildlife Services (WS) and its cooperators will begin distributing ORV baits on August 5 across rural areas by airplane and in suburban or urban areas by helicopter, vehicle, and bait station. ORV baits are coated with a fishmeal attractant and are packaged in two-inch plastic sachets or one-inch square cubes. To see photos of the vaccination baits, please visit www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/sets/72157623983143606/.

WS and cooperators will distribute ORV baits during the following time periods and based out of airports in the cities listed below:

In Northeast to Mid-Atlantic states during August:

- The Houlton, Maine, project will cover parts of northern Maine and distribute approximately 365,000 ORV baits by airplane and vehicle.
- The Upshur, W.Va., project will include portions of western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and a small area in southwestern Virginia, distributing approximately 530,000 ORV baits by airplane and vehicle. In addition to RABORAL V-RG®, APHIS will distribute another ORV bait, ONRAB, in select areas of West Virginia and Pennsylvania as part of an ongoing field evaluation.

In Massachusetts from mid-September through mid-October:

- The Cape Cod, Mass., project will cover parts of peninsular Massachusetts and distribute more than 70,000 ORV baits by helicopter, bait station, and vehicle.

In Southern states, during October:

- The Abingdon, Va., project will cover parts of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia and distribute more than 880,000 ORV baits by airplane, helicopter, and vehicle.
- The Dalton, Ga., project will cover areas in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, distributing approximately 840,000 ORV baits by airplane and helicopter. APHIS will also distribute ONRAB in the Greater Chattanooga, TN, area in tandem with RABORAL V-RG®.
- The Gadsden, Ala., project will cover parts of Alabama (including the Greater Birmingham area) and distribute approximately 1.1 million baits by airplane, helicopter, and vehicle.

The RABORAL V-RG® vaccine is safe for many animals, including domestic dogs and cats. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the baits but if they encounter them, they should leave them undisturbed. Dogs that consume large numbers of baits may experience an upset stomach, but there are no long-term health risks. If adults or children come in contact with baits, immediately rinse the contact area with warm water and soap.

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For additional information concerning rabies or the ORV program, please visit <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/programs/nrmp> or contact WS toll free at 1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).

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