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USDA Continues Field Assessment of Oral Rabies Vaccine for Raccoons and other Wildlife

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Press Release

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WASHINGTON, July 29, 2024 — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced it will continue field assessment of the oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait ONRAB in eight states as part of its larger-scale rabies management effort. This year's field assessment will evaluate ONRAB's distribution methods and effectiveness in raccoons, skunks, and other wildlife.

Rabies is a serious public health concern. While rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, it also is 100 percent preventable. Human exposures can be successfully remedied if medical attention is sought immediately following exposure. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 90 percent of reported rabies cases in the U.S. are in wildlife.

APHIS' Wildlife Services (WS) leads the cooperative National Rabies Management Program that works to prevent the spread of rabies in wildlife. The program currently uses another rabies vaccine, RABORAL V-RG[®], to control the disease in raccoons, coyotes, and foxes. WS is also assessing the effectiveness of the ONRAB vaccine to manage rabies in raccoons and skunks.

The ONRAB bait is a blister pack filled with the liquid vaccine and coated with a sweet attractant. When an animal bites into one of the baits, vaccine releases into their mouth and they develop immunity from rabies. 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 washed with warm water and soap. Each bait carries a toll-free number that people can call if they have additional questions concerning a bait contact.

Beginning in late July, WS and cooperators will distribute approximately 3.3 million ONRAB ORV baits by airplanes, helicopters, and vehicles in parts of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia to test the immune effects in targeted wildlife. Additionally, WS will distribute >73,000 ONRAB baits by helicopters and vehicles during October in parts of southern Tennessee to continue evaluating ONRAB's effectiveness using these distribution methods. WS personnel will sample raccoons and skunks approximately 6-8 weeks following bait

distribution to determine vaccination rates.

Field assessment of ONRAB during 2024 is a collaborative effort among APHIS; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); the vaccine manufacturer (Artemis Technologies Inc., an indirect, wholly owned subsidiary of Ceva Sante Animale S.A., Guelph, Ontario, Canada); and State departments of agriculture, health, and natural resources.

Throughout the month of August, distribution of this ORV bait will span portions of:

- Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Clinton, Erie, Essex, Genesee, Jefferson, Lewis, Niagara, Oneida, Orleans, Oswego, St. Lawrence, and Wyoming counties in New York.
- Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orange, Orleans and Washington counties in Vermont.
- Coos and Grafton counties in New Hampshire.
- Franklin and Somerset counties in Maine.
- Ashtabula, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Geauga, Harrison, Jefferson, Lake, Mahoning, Portage, and Trumbull counties in Ohio.
- Allegheny, Beaver, Crawford, Erie, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington, and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania.
- Barbour, Brooke, Greenbrier, Fayette, Hancock, Harrison, Lewis, Marion, Marshall, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, Nicholas, Ohio, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Randolph, Summers, Taylor, Upshur, Webster, Wetzel, and Wyoming counties in West Virginia.

During October, WS will distribute ONRAB baits in parts of Bradley, Hamilton, Marion, and Sequatchie counties in Tennessee.

For additional information concerning rabies or the ORV program, please visit <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/national-wildlife-programs/rabies> or contact WS toll free at 1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297). To view a photo of the ONRAB vaccine bait, please visit: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/7780297536/in/album-72157623983143606/>

APHIS protects the health of U.S. agriculture and natural resources against invasive pests and diseases, regulates genetically engineered crops, administers the Animal Welfare Act, and helps people and wildlife coexist. APHIS also certifies the health of U.S. agricultural exports and resolve phytosanitary and sanitary issues to open,

expand, and maintain markets for U.S plant and animal products.

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