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

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WASHINGTON, July 29, 2026 —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 six states as part of its larger-scale rabies management effort. This year's field assessment will evaluate ONRAB's effectiveness in raccoons, skunks and other wildlife using several distribution methods.

Rabies is a serious public health concern. While rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, it 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 a licensed rabies vaccine, RABORAL V-RG®, to control the disease in raccoons, coyotes, and foxes. APHIS is also assessing the effectiveness of the ONRAB vaccine, which is not yet licensed, to manage rabies in raccoons and skunks. Both oral rabies vaccine types will be distributed during this program.

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 bait contact.

Beginning on July 31, APHIS and cooperators will distribute approximately 2.8 million ONRAB ORV baits by airplanes, helicopters, vehicles and bait stations in parts of New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia to test the immune effects in targeted wildlife.

APHIS personnel will sample raccoons and skunks approximately 6–8 weeks following bait distribution to determine vaccination rates.

Field assessment of ONRAB during 2026 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 months of August and September, distribution of this ORV bait will span portions of:

- Coos county in New Hampshire.
- Erie, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, Niagara and St. Lawrence counties in New York.
- Ashtabula, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Harrison, Jefferson, Mahoning and Trumbull counties in Ohio.
- Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania.
- Barbour, Brooke, Greenbrier, Hancock, Marion, Marshall, Mercer, Monongalia, Monroe, Ohio, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Summers, Taylor, and Upshur counties in West Virginia.
- Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orleans and Washington counties in Vermont.

During the same timeframe, APHIS will also distribute RABORAL V-RG® in select areas of all six states where ONRAB distribution will occur.

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).