



# ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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## **Raccoon Baiting Project Begins Monday**

**PITTSBURGH** – The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) and U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services will start the county’s 20th annual Raccoon Rabies Baiting Program on Monday, August 2, 2021.

The ACHD has partnered with the [USDA Wildlife Services](#) every summer since 2001 to distribute hundreds of thousands of oral raccoon rabies vaccine baits across Allegheny County to eliminate the raccoon variant of rabies from the United States. In Phase I of the program from 2001 to 2015, the goal was to contain the westward spread of the variant; that goal was accomplished. Phase II of the project, started in 2016, aims to push the westward boundary of raccoon rabies eastward to the Atlantic.

“Allegheny County plays a critical role in rabies management and prevention in the United States,” said Jamie Sokol, Raccoon Rabies Baiting Project Manager. “Hopefully, the success of our program will serve as a model for other metropolitan areas as efforts to eliminate rabies in raccoons shift towards the eastern seaboard.”

Crews will distribute more than 300,000 baits in all 130 Allegheny County municipalities, and in parts of Beaver and Washington counties. Bait will be spread by hand August 2 to August 10; aircraft, including helicopters and fixed wing airplanes, will distribute bait throughout August. Residents might see aircraft moving slowly over the same area multiple times over a short period of time. This could be alarming to residents who are unaware of the program, so we ask for the public’s help in getting the word out about the program.

The oral rabies vaccine bait consists of a square block made from a compressed mixture of fishmeal and fish oil known to attract raccoons. The vaccine (dyed pink) is inside a plastic packet that is inserted in the middle of the block. Most of the baits will be consumed about five days after being distributed. Although the baits are not harmful to pets, residents are asked to keep their dogs and cats inside or on leash, so pets don’t eat the baits before raccoons can. To ensure raccoons are hungry, the ACHD also asks residents to bring food sources indoors and make sure that garbage containers outdoors have secure lids. Residents should avoid contact with the bait. If you touch the intact bait or the liquid vaccine inside, wash your hands and any other exposed area of skin with soap and water. In the unlikely event that a rash develops, contact your health care provider immediately.

Rabies is a virus transmitted by an animal bite or scratch, and exposures due to a bite or scratch are almost always fatal when left untreated. Any individual who is bitten, scratched or otherwise exposed to saliva from a stray or any other animal, should immediately cleanse the contact area with soap and water, seek emergency medical treatment and call the Health Department (412-687-2243) to report the incident.

For more information on the Raccoon Rabies Vaccination Baiting Project, visit:

<https://alleghenycounty.us/Health-Department/Programs/Special-Initiatives/Raccoon-Rabies-Vaccination-Baiting.aspx>.

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