



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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August 4-11 Dates for Health Department's Raccoon Rabies Vaccine Baiting

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) will conduct its annual raccoon rabies baiting program August 4 through August 11, 2017. ACHD employees will be identified as part of the “Raccoon Rabies Vaccination Program” with signage on their vehicles and on their t-shirts. Over 300,000 baits will be distributed in all municipalities with employees on foot and in vehicles.

The baits are specially made to attract raccoons and inoculate them with the rabies vaccine. Plastic packets containing vaccine are enclosed in fishmeal-scented blocks to attract raccoons. Baits will be placed in raccoon habitats, reducing the chances of human exposure to the vaccine. The public is asked to keep their pets on a leash, indoors or confined to their property as much as possible during the next two weeks, because while the baits are not harmful to pets, health officials don't want pets to find and eat the baits instead of raccoons.

The risk of infection to humans from an exposure is minimal, but the department urges the public to avoid contact with the bait and, if unable to avoid contact, to not touch it with bare hands. If a stray bait cannot be avoided and needs to be moved, it should be picked up using rubber or latex gloves or a shovel to protect hands. If the bait is intact, toss it into a nearby ditch, wooded area or other raccoon habitat. If it is partially eaten or damaged, the bait should be placed in a plastic bag and disposed of in the trash.

“If you touch an intact bait or the liquid vaccine inside, immediately wash your hands and any other exposed area of skin with soap and water,” advises Dr. Karen Hacker, Director of the Allegheny County Health Department. “In the unlikely event that a blister-like rash develops, you should contact your health care provider.”

To ensure raccoons are hungry and will eat the bait, the Health Department is also asking the public to make a special effort to bring any food indoors that raccoons might eat and to make sure that garbage containers kept outdoors have secure lids.

The number of rabid raccoons has steadily declined over recent years. Efforts to curb rabies in raccoons through programs such as this one, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and part of a multi-state effort to eradicate raccoon rabies, have significantly reduced the risk of this deadly disease for people and their pets.

The baiting program is in its sixteenth year in Allegheny County.

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