



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 5, 2014

CONTACT: Guillermo Cole
Public Information Officer
412-578-8004
gcole@achd.net

Raccoon Rabies Vaccine Baiting Set for August 11-15
Vaccinating Raccoons Reduces Risk of Rabies to Humans & Their Pets

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department will conduct its annual raccoon rabies vaccine baiting program August 11 – 15.

The program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and part of a multi-state effort to eradicate raccoon rabies, is in its thirteenth year in Allegheny County. Only three rabid raccoons have been reported in the County so far this year, compared to 23 during all of 2002, the program's first year.

While the number of rabid raccoons has steadily declined over the years, more importantly curbing rabies in raccoons has significantly reduced the risk of this deadly disease for people and their pets.

The baits are specially made for raccoons and laced with rabies vaccine – vaccine-containing plastic packets enclosed in fishmeal pellets or coated with a fish oil scent to attract raccoons. Health Department workers, wearing T-shirts and driving vehicles marked to identify them as part of the "Rabies Control Team," will distribute about 230,000 baits by hand in all municipalities on foot and from vehicles.

Bait will be placed in raccoon habitats, reducing the chances of human exposures to the vaccine. While the risk of infection from an exposure is minimal, the Health Department urges people to avoid contact with the bait and never touch it with bare hands.

Anyone who finds a stray bait should pick it up using rubber or latex gloves or a shovel to protect their 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, place the bait in a plastic bag and dispose of it 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 Health Director Dr. Karen Hacker. "In the unlikely event a blister-like rash should develop, contact your health care provider."

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 them to find and eat the baits instead of raccoons.

To ensure raccoons are hungry and will eat the bait, the Health Department also is asking the public to make a special effort to bring indoors pet food that raccoons might eat and make sure garbage containers kept outdoors have secure lids, perhaps even tied down with a rope or bungee cord, to keep away raccoons foraging for food.

###

KAREN A. HACKER, MD, MPH, DIRECTOR
ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
955 RIVERMONT DRIVE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15207
PHONE (412) 578-8004 • FAX (412) 578-8325 • WWW.ACHD.NET

