



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Raccoon Rabies Vaccine Baiting Set for August 10 – 14

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) will conduct its annual raccoon rabies baiting program from August 10 – 14. ACHD employees will be identified as part of the “Rabies Control Team” with signage on their vehicles and on their t-shirts. Nearly 230,000 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 ACHD Director, Dr. Karen Hacker. “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 fourteenth year in Allegheny County. Only two rabid raccoons have been reported in the County so far this year, compared to 23 during all of 2002, the program’s first year.

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