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WASHINGTON, Aug. 7, 2015— To prevent the further spread of raccoon rabies into America's heartland, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Wildlife Services program will begin its 2015 distribution of oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits in select areas in the eastern United States.

Wildlife Services (WS) and their cooperators will begin distributing the ORV baits by aircraft and by vehicle beginning on or about August 10. ORV baits are distributed across rural areas by airplane and in suburban or urban areas by helicopter or vehicle. The baits will be distributed in the following select areas and time periods.

- In Northeast to Mid-Atlantic States, between August 10 and early September:
The Plattsburgh, NY project will cover parts of northern New York and Maine, and distribute 423,000 baits by airplane and 3,960 by vehicle;
- The Brockport, NY project will cover parts of western New York, and distribute 31,500 baits by airplane;
- The Allegheny, PA project will cover parts of Pennsylvania and distribute 301,320 baits by vehicle;
- The North Lima, OH project will cover parts of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia and distribute 1,030,500 baits by airplane and helicopter and 45,000 baits by vehicle;
- The Clarksburg, WV project will cover parts of West Virginia and Ohio and distribute 1,021,500 baits by airplane and 12,600 baits by vehicle.

In Massachusetts during September and early October:

- The Cape Cod, MA project will cover parts of peninsular Massachusetts and distribute 39,540 baits by bait station and by vehicle.

In Southern States, between late September and mid October:

- The Abingdon, VA project will cover parts of Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia and distribute 1,009,800 baits by airplane and helicopter, and 14,400 baits by vehicle;
- The Dalton, GA project will cover parts of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee and distribute 1,764,000 baits by airplane and helicopter, and 25,920 baits by vehicle.

The WS National Rabies Management Program was established in recognition of the changing scope of rabies in which the primary human risk is now due to exposure from wildlife rather than domestic pets. The goal of the program is to prevent the further spread of wildlife rabies and eventually eliminate terrestrial rabies in the United States through an integrated program that includes vaccinating wildlife against the disease.

RABORAL V-RG® oral rabies vaccine baits are coated with a fishmeal attractant and may be packaged in one-inch square cubes or two-inch plastic sachets. For photos of the vaccination baits, visit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/sets/72157623983143606/>.

The RABORAL V-RG® vaccine has been shown to be safe in more than 60 different species of animals, including domestic dogs and cats. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the baits, but are asked to leave them undisturbed if they encounter them. Dogs that consume large numbers of baits may experience an upset stomach, but no long-term health risks. If contact with baits occurs, immediately rinse the contact area with warm water and soap.

Rabies is caused by a virus that infects the central nervous system in mammals. Signs suggestive of rabies include unusual, aggressive or calm and “friendly” behavior, an inability to eat or drink, balance problems, circling, seizures, coma and finally death. While rabies is fatal once symptoms occur, human exposures can be successfully treated if post-exposure follow up is sought immediately following a bite.

Since 1997, WS National Rabies Management Program has been working cooperatively with local, state and federal governments, universities and other partners to address this public health problem by distributing oral rabies vaccination baits in targeted areas. This cooperative program targets the raccoon variant in the eastern United States, and unique variants of rabies in coyotes and foxes in Texas.

For additional information on the raccoon oral rabies vaccine program, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/rabies or call 1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).

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