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WASHINGTON, Aug 14, 2015—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced it will begin its 2015 field trials in five states to evaluate the safety and immune effects of the ONRAB rabies vaccine in raccoons, skunks and other wildlife. APHIS has conducted field trials of ONRAB since 2011, and this year's trials will address new research questions.

APHIS' Wildlife Services division leads the cooperative National Rabies Management Program which aims to prevent the spread of wildlife rabies. The program currently uses another rabies vaccine that has been effective at controlling the disease in raccoons, coyotes, and foxes, but that has performed poorly in skunks under field conditions. The ONRAB vaccine is being tested to determine whether it could more effectively control the disease in skunks and thereby improve the overall success of the control program.

Beginning this month, APHIS' Wildlife Services program will distribute more than 1.6 million ONRAB oral rabies vaccination baits in parts of Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio and West Virginia to test the immune effects in targeted wildlife. Wildlife Services personnel will sample raccoons and skunks in the study areas both prior to and following bait distribution to determine vaccination rates.

The 2015 ONRAB field trials are a collaborative effort among APHIS, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the vaccine manufacturer (Artemis Technologies, Guelph, Ontario, Canada), and the State departments of agriculture, health and human resources, and natural resources. The 2015 field trials will span portions of:

- Clinton, Essex, Erie, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, Niagara, St. Lawrence, and Wyoming counties in New York;
- Addison, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Orleans, Lamoille, Caledonia, Chittenden, and Washington counties in Vermont;
- Coos and Grafton counties in New Hampshire;
- Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Portage and Trumbull counties in Ohio; and,
- Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Pocahontas, Raleigh, and Summers counties in West Virginia.

Data from these ONRAB vaccine field trials will be used to support potential licensure of the vaccine in the United States. The ONRAB vaccine is licensed in Canada



The ONRAB bait is a blister pack filled with the vaccine and coated with a

sweet attractant. When an animal bites into one of the baits it will swallow the vaccine and, with an adequate dose, develop immunity to rabies. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the bait, but are asked to leave the bait undisturbed if they encounter it. If contact with bait occurs, the contact area should be immediately rinsed with warm water and soap. Each bait carries a toll-free number that people can call if they have additional questions concerning a bait contact.

Rabies is a serious public health concern. If exposures to the virus are not treated it is almost always fatal. Costs associated with detection, prevention and control of rabies exceed \$300 million annually in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 90 percent of reported rabies cases in the U.S. are in wildlife. For additional information concerning rabies or the ORV program, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/rabies or contact Wildlife Services toll free at 1-866-4USDAWS (1-866-487-3297).

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