

- Tell your children about the raccoon vaccination program and tell them to leave any baits alone.
- Do not attempt to take a bait away from your pet! That is the same as taking food away from an animal. You may be bitten.
- Baits may be picked up while wearing gloves, or with a plastic bag or towel.
- Do not handle a partially eaten or damaged bait with bare hands.
- Damaged baits should be placed in a baggie and disposed of in normal trash.
- If you touch the bait or the liquid vaccine (a red fluid inside the bait), thoroughly wash your hands or exposed skin with soap and water
- Call the Ohio Department of Health, Rabies Information Line (1-888-722-4371) to report any incidents or to answer questions.

### What does the bait look like?

The oral rabies vaccine bait comes in two ways. The traditional bait is a brown square block made of fishmeal. The vaccine is inside a plastic packet inside the middle of the block. Another formulation is the coated sachet. It is just the plastic packet containing the



vaccine that is coated in fishmeal and oil. Fishmeal is known to be very attractive to

raccoons. The block is always used for ground baiting, and either can be used for aerial baiting.

### Rabies: Six ways to protect yourself and your family

- Do not feed, touch or adopt wild animals, and be cautious of stray dogs and cats. Rabid animals do not always appear vicious!
- Teach children to leave wildlife alone. Be sure your child knows to tell you if an animal bites or scratches them.
- Have your veterinarian vaccinate your dogs, cats or ferrets against rabies. Keep their vaccinations up-to-date.
- Tightly close garbage cans. Open trash attracts wild or stray animals to your home or yard.
- Feed your pets indoors; never leave pet food outside as this attracts wildlife.
- Call your doctor for advice if an animal bites you. Report the incident to your local health department.

The Oral Rabies Vaccination Project is conducted by the Ohio Department of Health in cooperation with the Ohio Departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture, your local health departments, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (USDA/APHIS/WS).

**Rabies Information Line**  
**1-888-722-4371**



Ohio Department of Health  
To protect and improve the health of all Ohioans  
Bob Taft, Governor

# Raccoons and Rabies



Questions And Answers  
About Oral Rabies Vaccine

## Why are there concerns about raccoons and rabies?

Rabies is a viral infection that affects the nervous system of mammals, including humans. The disease is almost always fatal to both people and animals. Raccoon rabies spreads rapidly and infects large numbers of raccoons. The disease often spreads to other wildlife and pets, making human exposure a real concern. To address this problem, the Ohio Department of Health, with assistance and support from the Ohio Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and federal and local partners, initiated a program to vaccinate wild raccoons along the Pennsylvania and West Virginia border to keep this epidemic from spreading throughout the state. This vaccination program protects everyone, not only the people in northeast Ohio.

## How is a raccoon vaccinated?

A raccoon is vaccinated by eating a bait containing the vaccine. The raccoon will develop antibodies in two to three weeks. These antibodies will protect the raccoon if it is exposed to another infected raccoon. If enough raccoons are vaccinated, the disease will be stopped.

## Can the vaccine cause rabies?

It is not possible to get rabies from the vaccine. The vaccine contains only a single gene of the rabies virus, not the entire virus.

## What if my dog or cat eats a bait?

The bait is not harmful to pets or livestock if they find and eat one. Because additional baits may have been dropped nearby, check the area for more. Any other baits can be removed and placed where they are more likely to be found by a raccoon, not your pet.

## Is the bait or the vaccine harmful to people?

The bait is made of fishmeal, an ingredient in animal feed so it is not harmful to touch an intact bait. However, the bait does have a strong odor, so wearing gloves is recommended.



The vaccine (red liquid) inside the packet contains vaccinia virus. People with eczema and immunosuppressed conditions, may be prone to a local infection from vaccinia if the vaccine (red liquid) gets into a wound or abrasion. Use soap and water to wash any skin area exposed to the vaccine to prevent this. Please call the Ohio Department of Health, Rabies Information Line at 1-888-722-4371 for further advice.

## What if I find a bait near my home?

Leave it alone if it is intact and in an area where pet or child contact is not likely. However, if the bait is out in the open or where contact by pets or children is possible, put on gloves and toss it into deeper cover.

If the bait is broken open or damaged, wear gloves or protect your hands by using a paper towel or plastic bag before picking it up. However, a person should not touch the bait if they are less than 18 years of age, pregnant, or immunosuppressed.

## Can this vaccine be used to vaccinate my dog or cat against rabies?

No, this vaccine is approved only for use in wildlife. A veterinarian, in accordance with state and local regulations, should vaccinate your pets. Pet vaccination is essential to protect your pet against rabies.

# TAKE THE BITE OUT OF RABIES

## How can I help?

The bait is intended for wild animals—specifically, raccoons. Everyone can help by keeping their pets inside or on leashes during the baiting time and about five days afterwards. This will help to prevent your pet from getting the baits and it gives raccoons a chance to eat the baits.

## Important reminders:

- Be aware of what the bait looks like.
- Keep dogs and cats inside or on leashes for several days after your area was baited. Most baits will be gone in about 3 days.