



# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs  
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## **USDA Distributes Oral Rabies Vaccine in Massachusetts and Ohio**

WASHINGTON, April 22, 2011--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will soon begin distributing oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits on Cape Cod and in the Cleveland metro area to reduce the incidence of raccoon rabies. APHIS' wildlife services program will begin the baiting work on or about April 25 on Cape Cod, Mass., and in five Ohio counties the first week of May.

In cooperation with the Cape Cod Rabies Task Force, 24,000 oral rabies vaccination ORV baits will be distributed by hand and in strategically positioned bait stations where raccoons are likely to travel. Coated sachets baits will be distributed by hand in seven towns from Barnstable to Orleans.

Since 2004, WS has been working to eliminate raccoon rabies from Cape Cod because the virus is a threat to wildlife populations, pets and public health and safety. As a peninsula, Cape Cod is an ideal landscape for testing rabies elimination strategies. Reported raccoon rabies cases dropped from 124 in 2004, to 50 in 2006. In 2010, the number decreased to 9 reported cases, all outside the current ORV zone. In the past two years, no animals from Yarmouth to the east have tested positive for raccoon rabies. The vaccine baiting program has been suspended in towns north and east of Orleans.

Beginning the first week of May, more than 84,000 fishmeal polymer baits will be distributed by hand or air in the Cleveland metro area, including portions of Lake, Geauga, Cuyahoga, Portage and Summit counties. WS partners with the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in this operation, which includes distribution using helicopters.

Ohio represents a key location in preventing the westward spread of rabies. In addition to spring and fall ORV bait distribution, WS has conducted trap-vaccinate-and-release operations for raccoons since 2004.

ORV baits are coated with a fishmeal attractant and may be packaged in one-inch square cubes or two-inch plastic sachets. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the baits, but are asked to leave them undisturbed should they encounter them. [More visual information is available at: [www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/4578217863/in/set-72157623983143606](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/4578217863/in/set-72157623983143606)].

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Most sightings of rabid raccoons occur during the spring and summer when people are more likely to come into contact with wildlife. Raccoon rabies is caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system in mammals. Symptoms 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, human exposures can be successfully treated, if treatment is sought immediately following a bite.

Since 1997, WS has been working to establish a rabies-free barrier in the eastern United States where the raccoon variant of rabies is known to exist. In addition to this work in Massachusetts and Ohio, WS has coordinated cooperative rabies control efforts in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia. Baiting in these states is scheduled from August through November.

For additional information concerning the raccoon oral rabies vaccine program, please visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/rabies.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/rabies.shtml) or contact WS toll free at 1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).

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