

MEMORANDUM

DATE:

TO: Counties in the Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) Distribution Area

- Veterinarians
- Physicians
- Hospital Infection Control
- Emergency Room Personnel
- Law Enforcement Officers
- Animal Control Officials
- Division of Natural Resources Personnel

FROM: West Virginia Oral Rabies Vaccination Project and
Your Local Health Department

RE: ORAL RABIES VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

During August 2004, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and cooperators will be distributing rabies vaccine-laced baits to establish an immune barrier to halt the spread of raccoon strain rabies in West Virginia. We anticipate completion by the end of September. The target area covers a wide corridor through the central part of the state, extending from the northern panhandle to the southern coalfields (please refer to enclosed map). We will be using low-flying fixed wing aircraft to distribute the baits.

Also, several local health departments in the bait drop area are conducting raccoon rabies active surveillance. Active surveillance includes actively looking for animals that may be infected with raccoon strain rabies. Acceptable active surveillance specimens are raccoons, foxes, skunks or coyotes that are sick, acting strange or found dead (including road-kill specimens). This surveillance is conducted year round on an ongoing basis. You can help with raccoon rabies active surveillance by notifying your Local Health Department if you become aware of any of the above active surveillance specimens.

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide you with information about the vaccine program, as well as facts relating to vaccine safety so that you can better advise your patients or clients should they come in contact with the bait or vaccine.

The baits are not harmful to pets or wildlife. The fishmeal polymer bait (dark brown color) consists of fishmeal, a synthetic binder, and fish oil. The vaccine is contained in a small, plastic-bag sachet within the bait. The baits also contain tetracycline hydrochloride, a long-term calciphillic biomarker used to assess bait acceptance by target and non-target species. Each bait contains approximately 2 mls of the rabies vaccine.

The baits are distasteful; it is not likely that they would be consumed if they were picked up by a person in the field. However, the possibility does exist for potential exposure via bait consumption or through handling a punctured vaccine chamber. There is one reported case of vaccinia infection in an individual who attempted to take the bait from a dog and was bitten in the process. Therefore, your clients should be advised *not* to take baits away from pets and to avoid direct contact with the baits.

Raboral, the vaccinia-rabies recombinant (V-RG) vaccine, is fully licensed (i.e., United States Veterinary Biological Product License) for manufacture and distribution. To receive this license, the vaccine was demonstrated to be pure, safe and efficacious in accordance with Federal regulations. The vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein vaccine has been demonstrated to be safe in over 50 avian and mammalian species, including primates.

Please be advised that the use of this vaccine in animals other than raccoons (e.g., feral cats) should be discouraged. The necessary research documenting sufficient immunization has not been completed. Additionally, at this time, Raboral is only available through Government-mandated programs.

Should you have a patient or client who has had contact with the bait or vaccine, please contact the Oral Rabies Vaccination Project at 1-800-423-1271 or 1-304-558-5358. Basic information about the exposure will be recorded and further medical questions can be answered at that time.

If a patient or client calls regarding finding an ORV bait, please inform them of the following:

- Instruct children to leave baits alone.
- Wear gloves or use a towel when picking up a bait. Although there is no harm in touching undamaged bait, they do smell quite bad. Wash thoroughly with soap and water any skin that may have been exposed to the contents of the bait.
- Do not attempt removal of an ORV bait from a dog's mouth, as this could result in being bitten. Eating these baits will not harm pets.
- Confine pets and look for other baits in the area. These baits should be removed from where pets could eat them.

Please do not hesitate to contact your local health department or the West Virginia Oral Rabies Vaccination Project at 1-800-423-1271 or 1-304-558-5358 if you have any questions regarding the scheduled bait drop. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important public health effort.