



For more information contact:
Toby D. Wagoner, Public Information Officer
Bureau for Public Health
Telephone: (304) 356-4042

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Raccoon Rabies Vaccination Program Set for August and September 2013

CHARLESTON, W.Va.--In an effort to control the spread of raccoon rabies, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, along with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will distribute rabies vaccines beginning in late August 2013. The vaccines will contain baits to help stop the westward spread of the raccoon rabies virus variant in the West Virginia.

The vaccination program covers a wide corridor through the central part of the state, extending from the northern panhandle to the southern coalfields.

“Each year, the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) tracks laboratory- confirmed rabies infection in raccoons,” said Commissioner and State Health Officer Dr. Marian Swinker. “To date in 2013, there have been 34 confirmed instances of rabies infection in raccoons reported to the Bureau for Public Health from 15 different counties. There were a total of 40 raccoons that tested positive for rabies in 2012.”

Hand-baiting with the block-type rabies vaccination baits will begin around August 26 in more urban locations of West Virginia. Aerial baiting is scheduled to begin on August 28 and is expected to conclude in early to mid-September. Distribution of baits is weather dependent and inclement weather may result in extended bait distributions.

Should baits be found close to a residence, please wear gloves when handling them and throw the baits into the closest wooded area. Keep your dogs and cats confined or on a leash during the baiting period and up to five days after baiting. The raccoon rabies vaccination baits are not harmful to pets. Should a pet have one of these baits in its possession, residents are urged not to take the bait away from their pet, as they may get bitten or inoculated with the vaccine. Residents who have any questions about the Raccoon Rabies Vaccination Program can call 1-800-423-1271 or click on www.dide.wv.gov.

More information regarding the raccoon rabies vaccination bait program is available at www.dide.wv.gov or by calling your local health department or the DHHR at 1-800-423-1271, extension 1.

The raccoon rabies vaccination bait program through DHHR is an effort of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Plant Health Inspection Service-Wildlife Services, in cooperation with local health departments, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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