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## Clinton County Health Department

### Press Release

### “Wildlife Rabies Control”

August 3, 2007

There have been dozens of rabid animals confirmed in Northern Vermont and in Southern Quebec this summer. Within the last two weeks, two rabid raccoons were captured in Quebec less than 5 miles from Rouses Point. In an effort to prevent the spread of raccoon rabies into **Clinton County**, several wildlife vaccination programs will be ongoing, in the community, over the next several weeks.

The programs are part of a **regional effort** to eradicate raccoon terrestrial rabies by immunizing raccoons before they become infected. August presents the first opportunity to vaccinate the young raccoons that were born this past spring. This effort will take place in three phases throughout August. Residents are also requested to report any sick, strange acting or dead raccoons, skunks or foxes, including road kill to the Health Department for testing.

#### **Phase One: August 6 - 17th**

The first project, implemented by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), involves a “Trap/Vaccinate/Release” program targeting raccoons in the Town of Champlain. Animals will be captured in humane traps, injected with rabies vaccine, ear-tagged and released. The public is requested to keep pet cats indoors during this phase. Any pet cats captured by accident will be released. Project coordinators are still seeking available property to set up their traps, any landowners who are willing to participate are encouraged to contact the Clinton County Health Department.

#### **Phase Two: August 8 - 10th**

Concurrent with the trapping program attractant baits containing an oral vaccine will be distributed by USDA contract plane over the Northern portion of Clinton County (Towns of Champlain, Mooers, Ellenburg and Chazy). The USDA will distribute over 118,000 bait packets by airplane. The bait consists of a fishmeal flavored covering designed to attract raccoons. The center contains liquid rabies vaccine. Raccoons are immunized when they consume the liquid vaccine inside of the bait.

The baits are small white plastic sachets resembling a fast food packet. Each has a printed label that reads “**RABIES VACCINE LIVE VACCINIA VECTOR. DO NOT DISTURB Merial, INC US VET LIC NO 298 1-877-722-6725**”. The toll-free number connects the caller directly with the NYSDOH Zoonoses Program for further information.

#### **Phase Three: August 24- 29th**

The third vaccination project will be carried out by the NY State Department of Health between August 24 and 29 in the Town of Beekmantown and portions of Plattsburgh, Schuyler Falls, Peru and Ausable. An additional 35,000 baits will be distributed using a helicopter from the NY State Police Aviation Unit that will target wooded areas. This bait distribution zone will extend along the eastern edge of Clinton County all the way South to the northern edge of the Essex County distribution zone. The baits used in this zone will differ slightly in appearance but contain the same vaccine. The baits are a brown, approximately 1 1/4 inch cube, the vaccine is contained within a heat-sealed plastic sachet inside the fishmeal cube and each bait also has a label with the above information. Bait distribution programs will also be conducted in Vermont and Quebec during the month of August to provide broad regional coverage.

#### **Phase Four: September**

During September, an additional follow-up trapping program will be conducted in several areas of the County to monitor wildlife response to the vaccination program. Animals will be humanely trapped, sedated and have a blood sample collected to check for antibodies to the rabies virus.

#### **Recommendations for the Public**

The New York State and Clinton County Departments of Health recommend the following actions be taken by the public during this vaccination campaign:

1. Supervise children outdoors both during and for one week following the bait distribution in your area to avoid inadvertent contact with baits.
2. Keep dogs and cats indoors or on leashes when outdoors both during and for one week following bait distribution to decrease the chance these pets will disturb the vaccine. The baits are not harmful to dogs or cats, but may cause them to vomit if ingested in large numbers. Do not try to remove bait from an animal's mouth. Whenever a pet is in direct contact with the bait, contact the Clinton County Health Department.
3. Call the Health Department **immediately** in the unlikely event that a child bites through the packet and ingests the liquid.
4. Wash hands immediately after bare-hand contact with the bait before making a call to report the exposure.

It is important to remember that it is not possible to get rabies from the vaccine. The vaccine does not contain the rabies virus but does contain modified vaccinia virus. Residents are instructed not to move baits found near the home if the baits are not out in the open. These bait packets have a strong fishmeal odor that is not attractive to people and most other animals, and are clearly identified.

If bait is found intact and out in the open where pets or children may come in contact with it, residents are advised to wear gloves and toss the bait deeper into the bushes where a raccoon is more likely to find it.

Rabies is fatal in unvaccinated animals and is a significant threat to the health of our wildlife, pet and human population. Rabies virus is found in the saliva and nervous tissue of infected animals. The Health Department recommends the following precautions to protect yourself and your family and pets from possible exposure to rabies:

- \* New York State law requires that all dogs, cats and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies by 4 months of age. Vaccinating your pet not only provides protection for the animal, but vaccinated pets act as a barrier to keep the rabies virus from spreading between wild animals and people.
- \* Do not feed wildlife or stray animals and discourage them from seeking food near your home.
- \* Do not approach an unknown animal, either wild or domestic, especially if it is acting in an unusual way. Report all animal bites and contact with bats to the Health Department.
- \* Keep garbage cans tightly covered and avoid storing any food outside.
- \* Children should be advised to tell an adult immediately if they were bitten or scratched by any animal.
- \* To prevent the possible spread of the rabies virus, no one, including trappers and nuisance wildlife rehabilitators, should transport and relocate any wild animals at this time

For more information on rabies, contact the Clinton County Health Department at 518-565-4870 or online at <http://www.clintonhealth.org>.

Endorsed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
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