

SUFFOLK COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 25, 2010

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Suffolk County Advances Rabies Baiting Program

Oral rabies vaccine for raccoons to be distributed by helicopter and truck

In an effort to contain the spread of terrestrial rabies on Long Island and potentially eliminate the virus from local wildlife, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS), in cooperation with the New York State Department of Health, Cornell University and the US Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, will begin distributing baits containing an oral rabies vaccine (ORV) in western Suffolk County. The one-inch-square fish-meal baits will be distributed from both Suffolk County automobiles and a Police Department helicopter.

"Rabies prevention is a vital issue of public health, which is why we have funded the Oral Rabies Vaccine Campaign with over \$1.5 million since the virus first appeared in the northwest portion of the county in 2006," said County Executive Steve Levy. "Because we know prevention is exponentially more cost-effective than treatment, we opt to use wisely the resources that we have."

Beginning Thursday, September 9th and ending on Friday, September 17th, 2010, about 50,000 baits will be distributed by county vehicles in residential areas. In addition, for a three to four day period, beginning on Thursday, September 9, 2010, approximately 115,000 baits will be released by a Suffolk County Police Department helicopter (weather permitting) that will target wooded areas. Raccoons are attracted to the fish-meal coated baits and become immunized when they bite into the plastic sachet that contains the vaccine. Contact with the vaccine poses no health threat to humans or domestic animals.

The primary baiting area is north of the Long Island Expressway (I-495) to the Long Island Sound and extends from the Nassau-Suffolk border, eastward to Route 111. Additional locations, south of I-495, where ground hand baiting will occur are: Brentwood, Bay Shore, Islip, Brightwaters, North Great River and Deer Park. All of Connetquot River State Park and Heckscher State Park will be baited by helicopter. This is a continuing countywide effort to eradicate raccoon terrestrial rabies by immunizing raccoons before they become infected and prevent spread to other wildlife.

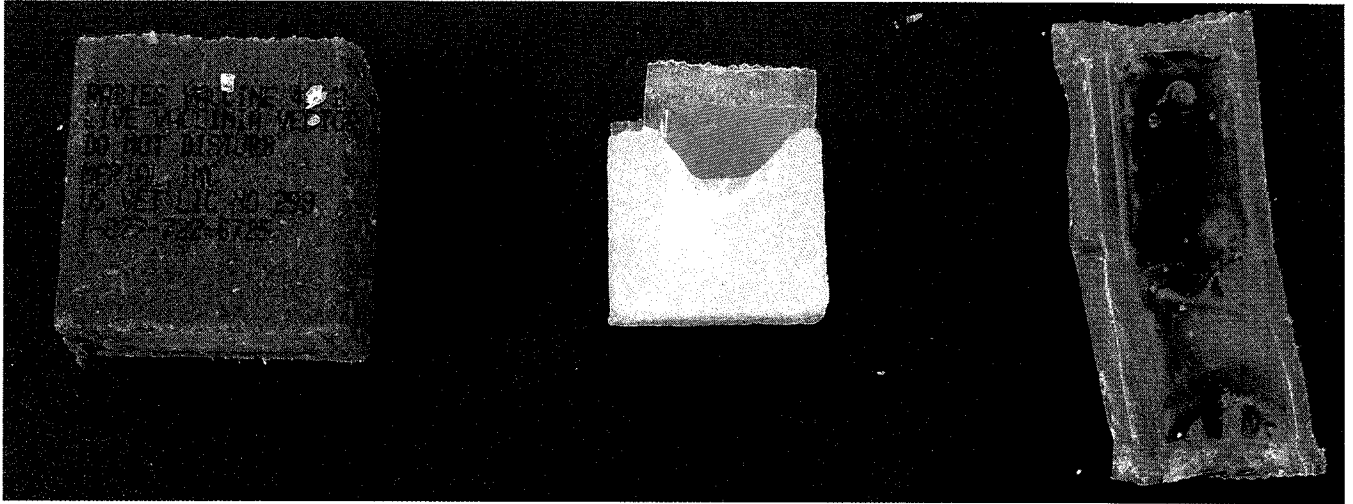
Noting that September 28, 2010, is World Rabies Day, SCDHS Commissioner Dr. James L. Tomarken, MD, MSW, MPH, MBA, FRCPC, FACP said, "We urge residents to assist us in our rabies prevention efforts by making sure their dogs and cats are up to date on their vaccines and keeping their pets under close supervision.

To date, 18 rabid raccoons have been confirmed, all on the Nassau-Suffolk border in the northwestern portion of Huntington. The last confirmed case of a rabid raccoon was in January of 2009. There is a high probability that other raccoons are also infected in this

area. Rabies is fatal in unvaccinated animals and is a significant threat to the health of our wildlife, pet and human population. Nassau County is also participating in this campaign in order to provide additional protection to our human, domestic animal and wildlife populations.

To view locations in the community where ground baiting and aerial drops will be made, please visit the SCDHS Website at:

<http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Home/departments/healthservices/publichealth/baitingprogram.aspx> Approximate dates will be provided showing when baiting activities will be occurring.



Protecting the Public - Oral Rabies Vaccine will be distributed by helicopter and truck in wooded areas of Suffolk County this September. Pictured left to right are a one-inch-square fish-meal bait and oil-coated plastic sachet baits

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

- Supervise children outdoors both during and for one week following the bait distribution to avoid inadvertent contact with baits.
- 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 eat 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 there is direct contact with the bait, contact the Suffolk County Public Health Hot-Line at 631-787-2200 or the following number 1-516-542-2323.**
- Call your local hospital **Emergency Room** in the unlikely event that a child bites through the packet and ingests the liquid.
- 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 attenuated vaccinia virus.

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- 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 with the following label: “Rabies Vaccine Live Vaccinia Vector. Do Not Disturb, Merial, Inc US Vet Lic. No. 298 1-877-722-6725.
- 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.

The Suffolk County Department of Health Services recommends the following precautions to protect yourself and your family from possible exposure to rabies:

- New York State and Suffolk County law requires that all dogs, cats and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies. 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 have contact with any animal other than your own.
- 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.
- 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, visit the New York State Department of Health website at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/rabies/rabies.htm>, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/>, or call the Suffolk County Department of Health Services’ Rabies Hotline at **(631) 787– 2200** weekdays, 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.