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Contact: Neil Ruhland
Public Health Information Officer
412-578-8312 (office)
412-339-7995 (cell)
Neil.Ruhland@AlleghenyCounty.us

Raccoon Rabies Prevention Baiting Efforts Begins July 25

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) and U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services will begin the county’s annual Raccoon Rabies Baiting Program on Monday, July 25, 2022.

“Allegheny County plays a critical role in rabies management and prevention in the United States,” explained Jamie Sokol, raccoon rabies baiting program coordinator. “The success of our program should serve as a model for other metropolitan areas as efforts to eliminate rabies in raccoons shifts eastward.”

Over the course of the six-week project, crews will distribute more than 300,000 baits in all 130 Allegheny County municipalities, as well as parts of Beaver and Washington Counties. Bait will be spread by hand August 1 to August 5; aircraft, including helicopters and fixed-wing airplanes, will distribute bait throughout the duration of the project.

Residents might see low-flying, slow-moving aircraft pass over the same area multiple times over a short period of time. Some residents who are unaware of the program may find this unusual or even alarming, so the ACHD asks for the public’s help in getting the word out about the initiative.

The oral rabies vaccine bait consists of a small blister packet that contains liquid vaccine inside. The bait is coated in a waxy, green coating that is attractive to raccoons. Most of the baits will be consumed within five days of dispersal.

The baits are not harmful to pets. However, residents are asked to keep their dogs and cats inside or on leash, so pets don’t eat the baits before raccoons can. To ensure raccoons are hungry, the ACHD also asks residents to bring food sources indoors and make sure that garbage containers outdoors have secure lids.

Residents should avoid contact with the bait. If, by chance, they come in contact with the bait or the liquid vaccine inside, they should wash their hands and any other exposed area of skin with soap and water. In the unlikely event a rash develops, residents should contact their health care provider immediately.

Rabies is a virus transmitted by animal bites or scratches. Exposures due to a bite or scratch are almost always fatal when left untreated. Any resident bitten, scratched or otherwise exposed to saliva from a stray or any other animal, should immediately cleanse the contact area with soap and water, seek emergency medical treatment and contact the Health Department by calling 412-687-ACHD (412-687-2243) to report the incident.

“Raccoon rabies spreads rapidly and infects large numbers of raccoons. The disease often spreads to other wildlife and pets, making human exposure a real concern,” remarked ACHD Director Debra Bogen. “Rabies is a very serious disease. It is important to never feed, touch or adopt wild animals, and be cautious of stray dogs and cats.”

The Raccoon Rabies Baiting Program has aimed to reduce the number of confirmed rabies cases in Allegheny County for 21 years ago.

For more information about the Raccoon Rabies Baiting Program, visit: alleghenycounty.us/raccoon

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Debra L. Bogen, MD, Director

Allegheny County Health Department – Public Information Office

542 Fourth Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Phone: 412-687-ACHD (2243) | Fax: 412-578-8325

www.alleghenycounty.us/healthdepartment

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