

2023 Rabies Vaccine Bait Drop



The rabies vaccine bait drop is an initiative of the United States Department of Agriculture that began in 1997 to help prevent rabies and to keep it from spreading north across the Canadian border. Rabies is a deadly viral disease of the brain that infects mammals. An additional bait drop to address rabies among wildlife in Chittenden County took place earlier this year.

Rabies vaccine is wrapped in sweet-scented bait attractive to raccoons and skunks. Approximately 265,000 of these quarter-sized blister packs will be dropped from low-flying aircraft in rural areas of Vermont. A switch allows pilots to keep bait from being dropped on roads, homes and areas where people are likely to be. In more densely populated areas, teams will carefully place bait by hand out of obvious sight.

In August, rabies vaccine bait will be dropped or hand-placed in:

Addison County

Bristol, Buels Gore, Ferrisburgh, Lincoln, Monkton, New Haven, North Ferrisburgh, Panton, Starksboro, Vergennes, Waltham

Caledonia County

Barnet, Burke, Danville, Groton, Hardwick, Kirby, Lyndon, Peacham, Ryegate, Sheffield, St. Johnsbury, Stannard, Sutton, Walden, Waterford, Wheelock

Chittenden County

Bolton, Burlington, Charlotte, Colchester, Essex, Hinesburg, Huntington, Jericho, Milton, Richmond, Shelburne, South Burlington, St. George, Underhill, Westford, Williston, Winooski

Essex County

Concord, East Haven, Granby, Lunenburg, Victory

Franklin County

Fairfax, Fletcher, Georgia

Lamoille County

Cambridge, Elmore, Hyde Park, Johnson, Morristown, Stowe, Wolcott

Orange County

Newbury, Orange, Topsham, Williamstown

Orleans County

Craftsbury, Greensboro

Washington County

Barre City, Barre Town, Berlin, Cabot, Calais, Duxbury, East Montpelier, Fayston, Marshfield, Middlesex, Montpelier, Moretown, Northfield, Plainfield, Waitsfield, Warren, Waterbury, Woodbury, Worcester

**Questions? Call the Vermont Rabies Hotline:
1-800-4-RABIES (1-800-472-2437)**

When will the bait drop begin and how long will it last?

This bait drop will begin in August. Timing and duration depend on weather conditions and other factors. The air drop will take several days, and hand placement can take up to two weeks. Times and locations of the bait drop are publicized in advance through the local media.

Will this project get rid of rabies?

No, this project will not get rid of rabies. It is designed to help reduce the likelihood of wildlife getting the disease. It is important for people to take precautions against rabies: vaccinate pets (especially cats and dogs), keep your distance from wild animals, and call your doctor right away if you are bitten or if you get animal saliva in an open wound, eyes, nose or mouth.

Who is conducting this project?

The project is an interstate/international cooperative effort. The research is directed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services. Other partners include the Vermont Departments of Health and Fish & Wildlife and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

What is the bait made of and what does it look like?

The bait is a blister pack covered with a sweet-smelling dark green waxy coating; the dark green coating has a label printed in black (see the photo on the front).

Is the bait harmful to children or pets?

Millions of baits have been dropped in the United States and Canada with no ill effects reported in people or pets. Even if you are exposed to the vaccine, you cannot get rabies from it. While the bait is not harmful to children, pets or other wildlife, it should not be handled or disturbed. If you come across the bait, leave it where it is so that it can be eaten by raccoons. If your dog picks up a bait, do not risk getting bitten by trying to remove the bait from the dog's mouth.

Will the bait attract raccoons or other animals to my property?

No, the bait will not attract raccoons or other animals to your property. However, it would be good for any raccoons that are already using the property to come across the baits.

Can I get bait to spread around my property?

We're sorry, no, the bait is not available for personal use. This project must be conducted in a controlled and scientific manner. The bait is an experimental use product approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and made available for the annual bait drop effort.

If I am bitten or scratched by a raccoon, should I assume the animal does not have rabies, since it probably ate the bait?

No. Every raccoon bite or scratch must be considered a potential rabies exposure. There is no way to tell if a raccoon was exposed to the disease prior to eating the bait. Call your doctor right away if you are bitten or get wild animal saliva in an open wound, eyes, nose or mouth.

What should I do if I find a bait?

If you find a bait, do not disturb it. Keep children away. If your pet eats a bait or your pet or child brings one home, call the [Vermont Rabies Hotline 1-800-472-2437](tel:1-800-472-2437) (toll free in Vermont) to report it.