



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## 15th Annual Rabies Bait Drop Starts Week of Aug. 21

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BURLINGTON – Raccoon rabies was first confirmed in Vermont in 1994, and by 1997 the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Green Mountain State had started an annual effort to stop the spread of the disease among susceptible wildlife.

During the week of Aug. 21, the 15th annual rabies bait drop will begin with the small fish-bait vaccine morsels hand-placed in rural areas of eight Vermont counties (Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Washington, Lamoille and Orleans). An aerial bait drop, with planes flying at an altitude of 500 feet along carefully planned grid patterns, will take place sometime between Aug. 31 and Sept. 5.

The bait drop project is part of an overall strategy by federal wildlife officials to try to stop the spread of raccoon rabies northward into Canada. Rabies is a fatal, viral disease found mainly in wildlife (especially raccoons, foxes, bats and skunks), but can infect domestic animals and people as well.

The baits cannot cause rabies and are not harmful to children or pets if touched or eaten, but the pellets should not be handled or disturbed. Bait discovered on a lawn or driveway should be removed with a glove and thrown out, and health officials are asking dog owners to keep their pets on a leash during the bait drop.

There has never been a human case of rabies reported to the Vermont Department of Health since the disease was first recorded in the state in 1963. The virus can spread through the bite of, or contact with saliva from, an infected animal. Rabies vaccine given soon after exposure is highly effective at preventing illness. Once the signs and symptoms of rabies start to appear, there is no treatment and the disease is almost always fatal.

A total of 54 animals tested positive for rabies in 2010, and 16 cases have been recorded so far this year, including raccoons, skunks, woodchucks and one bat. The highest recorded number of annual cases of animal rabies confirmed by the Health Department was 165 in 2007.

Vermonters are asked to avoid any animal that shows strange behavior. Do not try to trap or capture the animal, but instead call the state's Rabies Hotline at 1-800-472-2437 (1-800-4-RABIES). The hotline number is also printed on each bait.

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