



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Melissa Wade
Public Health Information Officer
412-578-8312 office
412-339-7995 cell
Melissa.Wade@alleghenycounty.us

Raccoon Rabies Vaccine Baiting Set for August 5-12 by Health Department

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) will conduct its annual raccoon rabies baiting program from Friday, August 5 through Friday, August 12, 2016. ACHD employees will be identified as part of the “Rabies Control Team” with signage on their vehicles and on their t-shirts. Nearly 300,000 baits will be distributed in all municipalities with employees on foot and in vehicles.

The baits are specially made to attract raccoons and inoculate them with the rabies vaccine. Plastic packers containing the vaccine are enclosed in fishmeal-scented blocks to attract raccoons. Baits will be placed in raccoon habitats, reducing the chances of human and pet exposure to the vaccine. The public is asked to keep their pets on a leash, indoors or confined to their property as much as possible during the next two weeks. While the baits are not harmful to pets, health officials don’t want pets to find and eat the bait instead of raccoons.

The risk of infection to humans from an exposure is minimal. However, ACHD urges the public to avoid contact with the bait and, if unable to avoid contact, to not touch it with bare hands. If a stray bait cannot be avoided and needs to be moved, it should be picked up using rubber or latex gloves or a shovel to protect hands. If the bait is intact, toss it into a nearby ditch, wooded area or other raccoon habitat. If it is partially eaten or damaged, the bait should be placed in a plastic bag and disposed of in the trash.

Health officials say the same protocol should take place if a pet finds and tries to eat the bait. Do not remove the bait from your pet’s mouth. Wait until they drop it, pick it up with protective gloves or other means and dispose of it in the trash. The baits will not harm your pet, but if they do eat several of them they may get an upset stomach and possibly diarrhea.

“If you touch an intact bait or the liquid vaccine inside, immediately wash your hands and any other exposed area of skin with soap and water,” advises Health Department Director, Dr. Karen Hacker. “In the unlikely event that a blister-like rash develops, you should contact your health care provider.”

To ensure raccoons are hungry and will eat the bait, the Health Department is also asking the public to make a special effort to bring any food indoors that raccoons might eat and make sure that garbage containers kept outdoors have secure lids.

The number of rabid raccoons has steadily declined over recent years. Efforts to curb rabies in raccoons through programs such as this one, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of a multi-state effort, have significantly reduced the risk of this deadly disease for people and their pets.

The baiting program is in its fifteenth year in Allegheny County.

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KAREN HACKER, MD, MPH, DIRECTOR
ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
542 FOURTH AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15219
PHONE (412) 687-ACHD • FAX (412) 578-8325 • WWW.ACHD.NET

