



## Portage County Combined General Health District

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*Rebecca Lehman, MPH, MPA, CHES, Health Commissioner*

Media Release  
August 15, 2025

### **Portage County Rabies Vaccine Baiting Slated for August 17- September 16, 2025**

The Portage County Health District is alerting Portage County residents that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Wildlife Services Program, in cooperation with several local health departments, and the Ohio Department of Health will begin distributing an oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait by ground and aircraft to vaccinate raccoons, skunks, foxes and coyotes in Eastern Ohio. The baiting will take place in several Ohio counties including Ashtabula, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Geauga, Harrison, Jefferson, Lake, Mahoning, Portage, and Trumbull counties. Baits are about the size of a matchbox and are coated with fishmeal flavoring or a sweet vanilla wax. ORV baits can be distributed by airplane, helicopter, or vehicle. Contingent on good weather, the operation should be completed by September 16, 2025.

Although the chance for an exposure incident is considered remote, please be familiar with the products and know what to look for in the event of a vaccine exposure.

#### **What if I find rabies baits?**

- If you find ORV baits, leave them alone, unless they are where children or pets play. To move ORV baits safely, you should:
  - Wear gloves or use a paper towel or plastic bag when picking up the baits.
  - Toss intact baits into a wooded area or other wildlife habitat.
  - Bag and dispose of any damaged baits in the trash.
  - Take precautions by practicing proper hygiene – wash with soap and water any skin or wounds that may have come into contact with ORV baits, especially if the bait was damaged.

#### **What if my pet eats the bait?**

- Don't panic. A few baits are not harmful, but a large number may cause upset stomach.
- Do not risk getting bitten or being exposed to vaccine by taking a bait away from your pet.
- Check the area for more baits and relocate any remaining baits to a wooded area.
- If your pet eats a bait, avoid your pet's saliva for 24 hours, and wash any areas that have been licked.

#### **Important Information:**

- There is no exposure risk in handling an intact bait. As a precaution, it is always recommended that people wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling any rabies vaccine bait.
- Do not attempt to remove an ORV bait from an animal's mouth, as you could be bitten. Vomiting from the waxy sachets and diarrhea from the coating of the vaccine have occurred in dogs that have ingested multiple baits.
- If the blister packet containing the vaccine breaks, the liquid vaccine will be visible. Wash your hands and any exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water.
- Advise people who had vaccine exposure to their skin, mucous membrane, or eyes to seek medical attention if they experience any rash, fever, sore throat, headache, conjunctivitis, vomiting, or diarrhea within 21 days of the exposure.

For questions on ORV or baiting, call USDA Wildlife Services at (330) 726-3386 or 1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-800-487-3297). You may also contact the Ohio Department of Health at 1-888-574-6656 or 614-752-1387. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important public health effort.

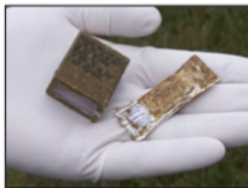
### About Rabies:

Rabies is a viral disease that affects animals and people and is still virtually 100 percent fatal. The rabies virus is found in the saliva of infected animals. Raccoons, skunks, and bats are most often responsible for reported cases of rabies, but foxes and coyotes also commonly transmit the disease. It is spread by a bite or a scratch. The best way to protect your family from rabies is to avoid contact with wild animals and animals that you don't know, and to vaccinate your pets against rabies and keep them current with their shots. If bitten, call your doctor. Call your veterinarian if your pet has contact with a wild animal. Rabies exposures in Portage County should be reported to the Portage County Health District at 330-296-9919, ext. 135.

## NOTICE

### ORAL RABIES VACCINATION AREA

The Wildlife Services (WS) program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is working with the Ohio State Department of Health to protect people and pets from the threat of rabies in your area. WS is distributing an oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait to vaccinate raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes and help stop further spread of rabies. ORV baits are about the size of a matchbox and are coated with fishmeal flavoring or a sweet vanilla wax. ORV baits can be distributed by airplane, helicopter, or vehicle.



**ORV Baits will be distributed between: August 17–September 16, 2025**

#### What if I find rabies baits?

- If you find ORV baits, leave them alone, unless they are where children or pets play. To move ORV baits safely, you should:
- Wear gloves or use a paper towel or plastic bag when picking up the baits.
- Toss intact baits into a wooded area or other wildlife habitat.
- Bag and dispose of any damaged baits in the trash.
- Take precautions by practicing proper hygiene – wash with soap and water any skin or wounds that may have come into contact with ORV baits, especially if the bait was damaged.

#### What if my pet eats the bait?

- Don't panic! A few baits are not harmful, but a large number may cause upset stomach.
- Do not risk getting bitten or being exposed to vaccine by taking a bait away from your pet.
- Check the area for more baits and relocate any remaining baits to a wooded area.
- If your pet eats a bait, avoid your pet's saliva for 24 hours, and have been licked.

#### Questions about ORV or bait you have found?

- Call USDA Wildlife Services: (330) 726-3386

**1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-800-487-3297)**



**About the Portage County Health District**

The Portage County Health District is committed to promoting health, preventing disease, and protecting the well-being of those who live, work, and learn in Portage County through education, prevention programs, and strong community partnerships. Learn more at [www.portagehealth.net](http://www.portagehealth.net).

**Media Contact**

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