



Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Wildlife Services

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Dear Cooperator:

The United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services program (USDA-WS) will distribute oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits in Alabama beginning on or about January 22, 2024 to vaccinate raccoons against the rabies virus. Bait distribution in Alabama is part of a nationwide, cooperative effort by USDA to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies in the eastern United States. The baiting program is being conducted in part to abate an emergency human health and safety issue associated with rabies. Implementation of this program in Alabama is a cooperative effort between USDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Alabama Department of Health, and other agencies.

Beginning on or about January 22, 2024, approximately 218,820 coated sachet baits containing the RABORAL V-RG® oral rabies vaccine (ORV) will be distributed across a 1,599 square-mile bait zone in Southwest Alabama, targeting raccoons and other wildlife. These baits will be distributed by low-flying airplanes and helicopters throughout a vaccination area that includes most of the coastal peninsula and parts of the following cities: Spanish Fort, Fairhope, Daphne, and Foley.

The aerial bait drop is expected to last for about two weeks. When ORV baits are distributed by aircraft, a navigator controls the bait machine and turns off the machine as necessary to avoid dropping baits on roadways, structures, large bodies of water, etc. The ORV baits to be aerially distributed over the majority of the bait zone are plastic packets of vaccine coated with an oily, fish-scented substance to attract raccoons. Each bait is marked with a toll-free number (1-877-722-6725) for people to call for assistance or information if they find or come in contact with a bait.

From January 22, 2024 - January 31, 2024 personnel will distribute approximately 2,160 ORV baits by vehicles in the Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Area and surrounding communities within the bait zone. The ORV baits used for hand baiting the urban/suburban areas are square blocks made of fishmeal and fish oil. The vaccine is contained inside of a plastic packet in the hollow center of the block. Each of these fishmeal baits is also imprinted with the toll-free phone number to report bait contacts.

It is recommended that anyone who finds a bait leave it alone to allow wildlife to find it. However, if a bait is intact and out in the open, it can be tossed deeper into the woods or brush where a wild animal is more likely to find it. People should wear gloves or use a towel if it is necessary to handle baits and wash their hands afterward. Pet owners should not attempt to take baits away from their pets, as they may be bitten in the process and exposed to the vaccine. Although baits are not harmful to pets, ingestion of a large number of baits may cause temporary stomach upset. Anyone who comes in contact with the liquid vaccine contained within the bait should wash their hands immediately and contact their local health department for further guidance.

Please contact the USDA at 1-866-487-3297 if you have any questions about the Wildlife Services Oral Rabies Vaccination Program. Enclosed is a map of the 2024 bait distribution zone. Additional information is also available from the website: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/programs/nrmp>

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important public health effort.

Sincerely,

Justin Reynolds
Wildlife Biologist