

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
2025 – PAHAN – 792-05-01- ADV
Bi-Annual Oral Rabies Vaccination in Western
Pennsylvania: Human Implications



Pennsylvania
Department of Health

DATE:	05/01/2025
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Debra L. Bogen, M.D., FAAP, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Bi-Annual Oral Rabies Vaccination in Western Pennsylvania: Human Implications
DISTRIBUTION:	Allegheny, Beaver, Crawford, Erie, Fayette, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties
LOCATION:	Western Pennsylvania
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Advisory”: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, INFECTION CONTROL, NURSING, AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL

EMS COUNCILS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

FQHCs: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) is releasing the following information regarding the 2025 spring oral raccoon rabies vaccine (ORV) baiting campaign.

This is the 25th year that federal, state and county agencies are working together to conduct an oral raccoon rabies vaccine (ORV) baiting project in parts of western Pennsylvania during May. Distribution of the baits will begin May 2 by hand followed by helicopter and fixed wing, low-flying aircraft in various portions of Allegheny, Beaver, Crawford, Erie, Fayette, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties. All baiting should be completed by May 20 (weather permitting).

For the fifth year in a row, two different vaccines will be distributed.

- **Raboral-V-RG** is manufactured by Merial, Inc. (Athens, Georgia) and has been used in the ORV campaign since 2001. The MSDS is available at https://docs.boehringer-ingenheim.com/SDS-RABORAL_V-RG_w_bait_US.pdf. Raboral-V-RG contains live highly attenuated recombinant vaccinia virus. The vaccine is in a heat-sealed plastic packet or “sachet.” The liquid in the sachet is pink in color and the sachet is coated with fishmeal.

Since 1990, over 100 million doses of Raboral-V-RG animal vaccine have been distributed in the United States. The only two documented human adverse reactions occurred after pet dogs punctured baits and owners (one pregnant and the other on multiple immunosuppressive medications) had direct contact of the vaccine with non-intact skin.

- **ONRAB** is produced by Artemis Technologies, Inc. (Guelph, Ontario, Canada) and is being distributed in Western Pennsylvania for the fourth year. The MSDS can be viewed at https://www.ccbh.net/s/ONRAB_MSDS.pdf. The bait consists of a polyvinyl chloride (PVC) blister pack covered with a sweet smelling, dark green, waxy coating. The dark green lid has a label printed in black. The liquid vaccine is colorless. The vaccine is a live virus vaccine that was prepared by inserting a rabies gene into the genome of a human adenovirus type 5 vector. ONRAB is expected to be a safer alternative to Raboral-V-RG given that many humans have immunity to the adenovirus vector. This live virus vaccine could cause an adenovirus infection in a human who accidentally breaks open a bait package if the person is not already immune. However, adenovirus infections are typically mild gastrointestinal or respiratory infections without significant or severe clinical symptoms. ONRAB has been distributed in other states since 2011 with no documented adverse reactions.

For both types of vaccines, the ORV baits are specifically designed to attract wild raccoons. When an animal bites into a bait, the packet ruptures and allows the vaccine to make contact in the animal's mouth and throat. Animals that have contact with an adequate dose of the vaccine develop antibodies against rabies. The baits have been safety tested in dogs, cats and other domestic animals and should not harm them even if ingested.

Please report any suspected accidental human contact with the vaccine or suspected adverse events to the appropriate local health department or PA DOH district via our toll-free line (1-877-PA-HEALTH) or by dialing directly:

Allegheny County Health Department: 412-578-8310

Erie County Department of Health: 814-451-6700

Beaver, Greene, Fayette, Washington, or Westmoreland Counties (PA DOH SW District): 724-830-2701

Crawford (814) 332-6947, Lawrence (724) 656-3088, or Mercer Counties (724) 662-4000.

Consultation is available for human exposures to vaccine and for suspected adverse events. Consultation is particularly important for ocular exposures, for exposed individuals with immune-suppression or immune-deficiency, and for individuals who develop one or more vesicles. Vaccinia immune globulin and anti-viral agents are available if indicated. If you are unable to reach your local health department or district office in a timely manner, consultation is available through the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 717-787-3350.

Although ORV programs have produced very few documented adverse human events anywhere in the world, it is important to educate individuals to avoid contact with bait contents, wash any areas of accidental exposure, and maintain surveillance for adverse events, including vesicles that develop on skin areas exposed to vaccine or at bite wound sites.

A poster alerting residents of baiting areas, a brochure and fact sheets on rabies are available at: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Rabies.aspx>.

The USDA ORV site is at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/rabies>.



Raboral-V-RG sachets



ONRAB packets

Individuals interested in receiving future PA-HANs can register at:
<https://ondemand.mir3.com/han-pa-gov/login/>

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of May 1, 2025, but may be modified in the future.