



## NEWS RELEASE

### Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

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### RABIES VACCINE AIRDROP SCHEDULED IN ERIE & NIAGARA COUNTY

#### *Efforts to Fight the Spread of Rabies*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— In its continuing effort to fight the spread of rabies, the Erie and Niagara County Departments of Health, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife services, will be participating in an aggressive raccoon rabies vaccination initiative to begin tentatively on August 21, 2012 and running through August 31, 2012 throughout these counties using a fixed wing aircraft, helicopter, and hand baiting methods of vaccine distribution. This schedule may be adjusted slightly due to inclement weather conditions.

"Beginning August 21, 2012, USDA and local agencies personnel will be distributing vaccine-laden baits by airplane, helicopter, and hand distribution throughout the region as part of efforts to halt the spread of rabies," **said Dr. Burstein**. "Rabies is a very serious disease. An immunized raccoon population will decrease the possibility of rabies exposure to people and domestic animals. In the year 2012 to date, Erie County Health officials have reported 28 animals testing positive for rabies, including 13 raccoons, 12 bats, 1 fox, 1 skunk, 1 deer, and 1 bovine on the Erie/Cattaraugus County border."

**A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE has been set for the distribution of the rabies vaccine baits as follows:**

- **August 21, 2012: Fixed Wing aircraft baiting to begin and take approximately 1 day to complete**
- **August 25, 2012 : Hand baiting to begin and take approximately 4-5 days to complete**
- **August 27, 2012 : helicopter baiting to begin and take approximately 4 days to complete**

The baits used for this operation are not harmful to people, pets, or wildlife. The baits consist of fishmeal, a wax binder, and fish oil. The vaccine chamber in the center of the bait is filled with an oral rabies vaccine that is licensed for use against raccoon rabies in the United States.

If your dog picks up bait, please don't risk getting bitten while attempting to remove the bait from the animal's mouth. It is also important to note that the bait will not attract raccoons to your property; raccoons that are already using the property will be attracted to the baits.

If you find baits, please do not disturb them. Please keep your dogs and cats on leashes so that wild animals may eat the baits. If you are exposed to bait or vaccine, or if your pet eats a bait or brings bait home, please call 1-877-722-6725 to report the occurrence. For questions or concerns, contact the New York State Department of Health at 1-518-473-4439.

This program is supported financially through the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services for the continuation and expansion of the wildlife rabies vaccination program in New York State, including Erie and Niagara counties. For more information, please call the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services office at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297) or visit

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/oral\\_rabies/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml)

You may also obtain further information regarding rabies and other public health issues at

<http://www.erie.gov/health>

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