

# Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccination Project (CCORV)



In collaboration with the Cape Cod Rabies Task Force, the United States Department of Agriculture/Wildlife Services is continuing a project to help control raccoon rabies on Cape Cod, MA.

## **How prevalent is raccoon rabies in Massachusetts?**

Raccoon rabies was first reported in Massachusetts in September 1992. Since that time, through 2013, there have been greater than 5,900 wildlife cases of rabies in Massachusetts. Domestic animals are at risk for developing rabies when they are bitten by an infected wild animal. Every year, many people in Massachusetts are exposed to rabies either through direct contact with infected wildlife or by contact with domestic dogs and cats exposed to infected wildlife.

## **What is the Massachusetts Wildlife Rabies Vaccination Project?**

From 1994 to March 2004, this project created and maintained a barrier to keep Cape Cod free of rabies by vaccinating a large number of raccoons in towns surrounding the Cape Cod Canal. As of March 2004, the first rabies case was detected on Cape Cod beyond the Canal, indicating a breach in the vaccine barrier, and rabies has since spread throughout the Cape. In cooperation with County, State and Federal agencies, we continue to vaccinate Cape Cod wildlife against this disease to reduce rabies cases with an ultimate goal to eliminate rabies on Cape Cod.

## **Where is the Project taking place?**

The current vaccination zone will cover the area from the Cape Cod Canal east to Chase Gardens Creek in Dennis and the Bass River at the Yarmouth-Dennis town line. In addition, Mainland Bourne and Sandwich, Plymouth, Wareham, and portions of Carver, Kingston, Middleboro, Rochester, and Marion will receive baits.

## **How can free-ranging raccoons be vaccinated against rabies?**

The vaccine is contained in baits that have a strong fish smell specifically attractive to raccoons and unpleasant to people. Raccoons that consume a vaccine-bait unit are vaccinated against rabies. This type of vaccine is desirable because it can be distributed in the environment and is, potentially, self-administered by wildlife. Vaccine containing baits are distributed from cars along roadsides in wooded, brush-covered, and wetland areas where raccoons are likely to find and eat them. Bait stations are used to distribute the vaccine to wildlife in wooded portions of the area. Driveways, lawns, buildings, schools and agricultural fields are avoided.

## **Does the vaccine cause any ill effects in wildlife or pets?**

Doses of up to 75 times the amount of vaccine contained in one bait have been fed to raccoons and dogs with no ill effects. However, dogs that eat several of the fishmeal block baits may experience a temporary upset stomach. A number of dogs who have eaten baits have been reported since the beginning of our efforts and no ill effects other than an occasional upset stomach have been reported.

### **How long do baits stay in the environment?**

Studies have shown that most baits are eaten within four days and almost all baits are gone in one week. If baits are not found and eaten, they will dissolve, exposing the vaccine packet to sunlight and air, making the vaccine ineffective.

### **What might happen if a person finds a bait or becomes exposed to the vaccine?**

The intact vaccine-bait unit is safe for people to handle. The liquid vaccine is enclosed within a plastic packet that is either sealed within a bait block, or simply coated with the fishmeal attractant. Each bait is labeled with a warning message that includes a number to call for information. If intact baits are found, they should be placed in brushy areas where people or pets are not likely to find it. Chewed baits should be picked up with a paper towel and disposed of in the trash. If a person in physically good condition has direct contact with or ingests the liquid vaccine, there should be no adverse health effects. If a person in a compromised state of health is exposed to the liquid vaccine through an open wound or by ingestion, they could experience a reaction to the vaccine. *If any person is exposed to the liquid vaccine, please call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at (617) 983-6800. Please call USDA Wildlife Services at (508) 476-2956 with all other concerns or questions*

### **Can oral rabies vaccine baits be purchased for use in backyards?**

Oral rabies vaccine baits are not available for purchase by the general public or other groups. The distribution of the baits is a permitted activity through the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

### **What do we do if we see sick wildlife or are exposed to a rabid animal?**

Call your animal control officer or the police if you see sick wildlife - do not handle wildlife! If you do come in to contact with wildlife, wash all wounds with soap and water thoroughly; then, contact your doctor or veterinarian. Always keep your pets up to date on their rabies vaccinations.

For More Information Please Contact:

1) United States Department of Agriculture:

For questions regarding domestic animal contact with bait, call USDA Wildlife Services MA/CT/RI Rabies Program Coordinator Brian Bjorklund at **(508) 476-2956**

2) The Massachusetts Department of Public Health:

For questions about human contact with bait, call MDPH at **(617) 983-6800**

3) Information is available through the following websites:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health:

<http://www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/epii/rabies/rabies.htm>

USDA National Rabies Management Program at: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/rabies/>

Vaccine information at: <http://www.raboral.com/>



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# RABIES VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

VACCINE TO REDUCE RABIES IN WILDLIFE WILL BE DISTRIBUTED  
FROM APRIL 18-MAY 24 IN:

PLYMOUTH, WAREHAM, KINGSTON, CARVER, MIDDLEBORO, ROCHESTER, MARION, BOURNE,  
SANDWICH, MASHPEE, BARNSTABLE, YARMOUTH, & DENNIS

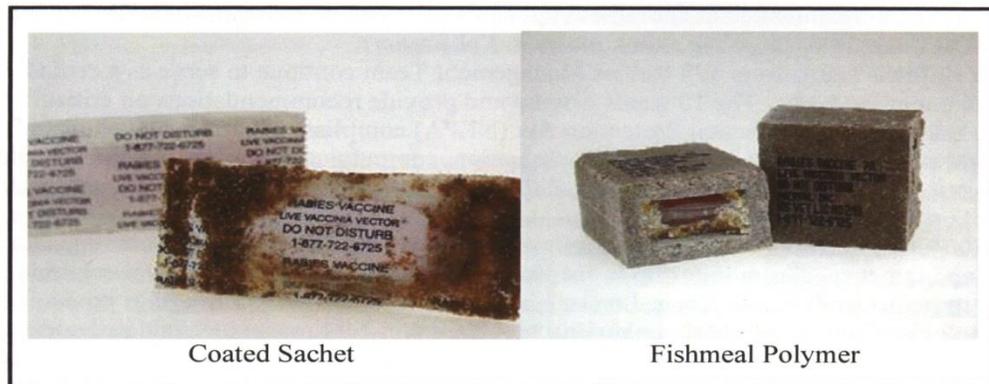
If you find a vaccine/bait package:

- USE A GLOVE OR A TOWEL TO PICK IT UP. Throw it into the woods where children and pets will not find it. If no suitable place is available, dispose of the bait in the trash.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after handling the vaccine/bait package.
- If your pet has eaten or had contact with a bait, please report the contact to: USDA Wildlife Services' MA/CT/RI Rabies Program Coordinator Brian Bjorklund at (508) 476-2956. The bait is not harmful to pets. We use this information to educate those distributing the baits that their baits may not have made it to their target destination.
- If you or another person has had contact with the liquid vaccine, wash the area thoroughly and call the Department of Public Health at (617) 983-6800.

Rabies is present in wildlife in all areas of Southeastern Massachusetts. Do not handle wildlife. If you should come into contact with wildlife, report it to your local animal control.

Make sure your cats, dogs and other pets have received their rabies vaccinations.

For more information on the Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccination Program call (508) 476-2956, stop by your Town Board of Health or visit <http://www.mass.gov/dph/rabies> or <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/rabies/>



*Two types of oral rabies vaccination baits will be distributed: A sachet and a bait block. Both contain the same amount of vaccine.*



*367 ORV Bait Stations (similar to that pictured to the left) will be deployed throughout much of Southeastern MA. Each station will originally contain 60 ORV block baits and will be periodically checked over a three-week period.*