

PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

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Oral Rabies Vaccine Program Slated for Wednesday, May 13, 2009

The Portage County Health Department will conduct its spring Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) operation on Wednesday, May 13th. The Portage County Health Department will throw baits on foot and from vehicle in Streetsboro and Aurora on May 13, 2009. The rabies baiting program is in conjunction with the Ohio Departments of Health (ODH) and Natural Resources, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services program.

This operation is part of a National Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) program, which has been conducted in Ohio and other states since 1997. Vaccinating raccoons along Ohio's eastern border has successfully slowed the spread of Raccoon Rabies Variant (RRV) into Ohio from Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The Portage County Health Department conducts this operation twice each year. The fall 2009 ORV baiting is slated for late August or early September.

Portage County Health Department Environmental Services employees make every effort to throw baits into deep brush and wooded areas. If baits are found in areas frequented by pets or children, toss the baits into deeper cover. Anyone handling baits should wear gloves. If a person's skin is exposed to the vaccine, which appears as a red liquid, thoroughly wash the area with soap and water.

Portage County Health Department Environmental Services employees will use a 2x2-inch fishmeal bait. Residents should avoid the baits and keep pets confined during the baiting period. In particular, dogs are attracted to the baits and will occasionally eat them. Do not try to take bait away from your pet; you may be bitten. The baits are not harmful to pets. Most of the baits disappear within 24 hours; however it is important that raccoons have every opportunity to eat them.

The rabies virus is found in the saliva of infected animals, most often raccoons, skunks and bats. 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 Department, 330-296-9919. Questions about baiting and vaccine exposures may be directed to the ODH information hotline, 1-888-722-4371.

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