Dear Colleague,

This is a reminder that the province is continuing its annual wildlife rabies control operations for 2008. The trap-vaccinate-release programs have been underway since the beginning of July. From mid-August to mid-September, rabies vaccine baits targeting foxes will be distributed throughout a large area of southwestern Ontario. In addition, the urban river ravines of Guelph and Cambridge were treated in mid-July.

This ministry is committed to the research, control and eradication of rabies in Ontario, thereby protecting the health and safety of the public, their pets and the wildlife of this province. Our programs are so successful that broad areas of southern Ontario are free of fox and raccoon rabies.

A person exposed to rabies should receive treatment without delay. If there is a delay in treatment and symptoms appear, the disease is fatal.

We use a number of control measures in the fight against the rabies virus:

- control measures at the point of infection (may be implemented when a new case is confirmed),
- trap-vaccinate-release programs (beginning in July); and
- widespread aerial vaccine baiting (beginning in August) and limited baiting in urban areas (beginning in July)

Since 1989, we have been distributing oral rabies vaccine baits targeting foxes and raccoons (since 1999) on a large-scale in Ontario. When ingested, these baits immunize the targeted species against rabies. Our efforts have focused mainly on foxes as foxes have been the main rabies host in Ontario since the late 1950’s. Our efforts have been so successful that fox rabies cases have decreased by 98%; there were only 44 fox strain rabies cases in 2007, down from an average of 1,500 annually before control measures were implemented. In most areas, when rabid foxes have been eliminated by our baiting programs, a decrease of rabid skunks soon followed. This has not happened in certain areas of south-western Ontario where remnant pockets of rabid skunks carrying and transmitting the fox strain of rabies persist.

The Ontario government has declared the province free from raccoon rabies. International standards set by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) require two years without a confirmed case before a jurisdiction can assert it has eliminated a particular strain of rabies. The last confirmed case of raccoon strain rabies in Ontario was September 2005. As
Ontario is now free from raccoon rabies, the high-risk area previously implemented in eastern Ontario has been discontinued. If new cases are detected a new high-risk area may need to be implemented as part of an emergency response plan.

The rabies control program is a joint effort that receives important input from a variety of partners across Ontario. Regional health units, municipalities, wildlife rehabilitators, licensed trappers, wildlife control agents and aboriginal communities are all key to the continued success of Ontario’s world-renowned rabies control program.

Included in this information package is:
1) Map of rabies control operations for 2008
2) News Release – Controlling Disease with Rabies Baits
3) Rabies Vaccine Bait Fact Sheet
4) Protect Your Family Fact Sheet

For further information about rabies prevention and control operations and to view updated maps, visit the Rabies in Ontario web site www.ontario.ca/rabies or call our rabies hotline at 1-888-574-6656.

Sincerely,

Adam McAllister
Rabies Research and Development Unit
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR PETS AGAINST RABIES

You can protect your family and your pets from any rabies strain by observing the following rules:

- Have your pets vaccinated according to instructions from your veterinarian.
- Do not feed wild animals. You may be putting your family in danger.
- Warn your children to stay away from wild or stray animals.
- Take measures to discourage wild animals from taking up residence in your home or on your property. For example, cover up potential entrances, such as uncapped chimneys, loose shingles, and openings in attics, roofs and eaves. You may want to contact a professional for advice.
- Do not attempt to trap wild animals that are causing damage to your property. Instead, contact a professional animal control officer to remove nuisance animals.
- Do not trap and transport wild animals to a new location. You could spread disease.
- Do not keep wildlife as pets. It is against the law.
- Report any animals behaving strangely to your local animal control office.
- Do not touch dead or sick animals except to bury or dispose of them. Do so carefully, wearing protective gloves and making sure pets cannot get at the carcasses.
- Do not try to nurse sick animals to health.
- If you think you, or any member of your family, has been in contact with a rabid animal, immediately contact your local Health Unit, doctor, or go to your local emergency health care center.
- Have all dead, sick or easily captured bats that have come in to contact with a human or pet, tested for rabies. Do not touch the bat. Contact your local Canadian Food Inspection Agency for testing.

For further information on rabies, visit http://rabies.mnr.gov.on.ca/.

For further information, contact the Ministry of Health Information Line, toll-free 1-888-668-4636. In Toronto, call (416) 327-0427.

Contact:

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Ministry of Natural Resources
(705) 755-1551

Disponible en français

http://rabies.mnr.gov.on.ca
CONTROLLING DISEASE WITH RABIES BAITS
McGuinty Government Distributing Vaccine To Protect Public Health

This summer, the province will distribute 1.2 million baits containing a vaccine to control rabies in skunks and foxes. The vaccine will also help Ontario remain free of raccoon rabies.

The baits will be distributed by aircraft or by hand in the following areas:
- Throughout southwestern Ontario
- Along the Welland Canal in Niagara region
- On selected islands in the St. Lawrence River and
- In urban green spaces in Guelph and Cambridge.

The public is asked to please leave baits undisturbed if encountered.

A limited number of rabies cases are still found in southwestern Ontario. Rabies is also present near the United States border in the Niagara and St. Lawrence River areas.

QUOTES
“Ontario has developed an oral rabies vaccine for raccoons and skunks that is proving to be the most effective in North America,” said Natural Resources Minister Donna Cansfield. “Our province continues to be a world leader in rabies control.”

QUICK FACTS
- Ontario has reduced rabies cases in the province by over 98 per cent since rabies control programs began in 1992.
- Ontario has been raccoon rabies free since September 2005.
- Exposure to a bait is not harmful to people or pets, but if people or pets come in contact with the vaccine contained in the bait, contacting a doctor or veterinarian as a precaution is recommended.
- Flavoured baits containing rabies vaccine immunize most skunks, foxes and raccoons that eat them.

LEARN MORE

→ Read more about and see photos of rabies vaccine baits (ontario.ca/rabies).
→ Learn more about rabies prevention and control programs in Ontario.
Rabies Control Operations
Ontario 2008

Fox Strain Baiting
September 2008

Raccoon Strain Baiting
August 2008

Trap-Vaccinate-Release
July to October 2008

Note: This map is a draft and subject to change based on local circumstances and additional rabies cases.


This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being precise indicator of routes, location of features, nor as a guide to navigation.