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CONTACT: Kara Kane / kara.kane@erie.gov / (716) 858-4941

Rabies vaccine air drop and ground baiting for wildlife populations will begin in late July

USDA partners with Erie County Department of Health to distribute rabies vaccine in urban, suburban and rural communities

ERIE COUNTY – The yearly rabies vaccine distribution for wildlife populations in Erie County is scheduled to start in early August. This vital service uses U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) aircraft and Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) sanitarians on the ground to place oral rabies vaccine in places where wildlife will eat it. When foxes, skunks, raccoons, woodchucks and other mammals eat these small green packets the size of a quarter coin, they gain protection against rabies, a virus that is 100% fatal.

Helicopter distribution will start around **July 30-August 3**, depending on weather conditions. Ground bait distribution in urban and suburban areas of Erie County will take place approximately **July 29-August 3**. Fixed wing aircraft will run from about **August 15-17** for counties in Western New York: Erie, Alleghany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming, also depending on weather conditions. Each year, the USDA distributes about one million baits throughout New York.

“Dropping rabies vaccine from the sky is a practical way to protect wildlife populations against rabies, and it reduces the rabies transmission risk to humans and pets,” **said Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein**. “Rabies is a devastating disease to humans and animals that has no cure. Vaccination programs and vigilant investigations into animal bites and scratches are the strongest defenses we have against the rabies virus.”

“This bait drop complements the work that our environmental health division does with free rabies vaccine clinics and our rabies exposure investigations, and the current rabies bait has been shown to be widely accepted by the targeted wildlife across the Northeast,” **said Environmental Health Deputy Director Peter Tripi, who manages the county’s Vector Control Program**. “These distributions have gone smoothly in past years because of the strong partnership we have with the USDA and our organized, systematic approach. Our vector control investigators will distribute bait in targeted habitats in urban and suburban areas, dropping bait where the air drop cannot reach safety, or at all.”

Residents who come in contact with wildlife vaccine packets can call the NYSDOH Rabies Information Line (888) 574-6656 with questions or concerns.

- Do NOT disturb vaccine packets. Most packets are eaten within four days; almost all baits will be gone within a week. If packets are not found and eaten, they will harmlessly dissolve and exposed vaccine will become inactivated. If you must move a vaccine packet, wear gloves or use a plastic bag or paper towel to pick it up. Place any damaged baits in the trash; throw intact baits into a wooded area or other raccoon/wildlife habitat.
- Residents should WASH HANDS IMMEDIATELY if they come into direct contact with the vaccine or packets, then call the NYSDOH Rabies Information Line at (888) 574-6656.

Additional recommendations include:

- Supervise children's outdoor activities during bait distribution and for one week afterward.
- Confine dogs and cats indoors and observe leash laws during the bait distribution interval and for one week afterward. This will increase the probability of wildlife vaccination and decrease the chance of pets finding the baits.
- Baits and vaccines are not harmful to domestic animals. However, an animal may vomit if it consumes several baits.
- Residents should not risk being bitten while trying to remove bait from your pet's mouth.



Image of ONRAB "Ultralite" Bait

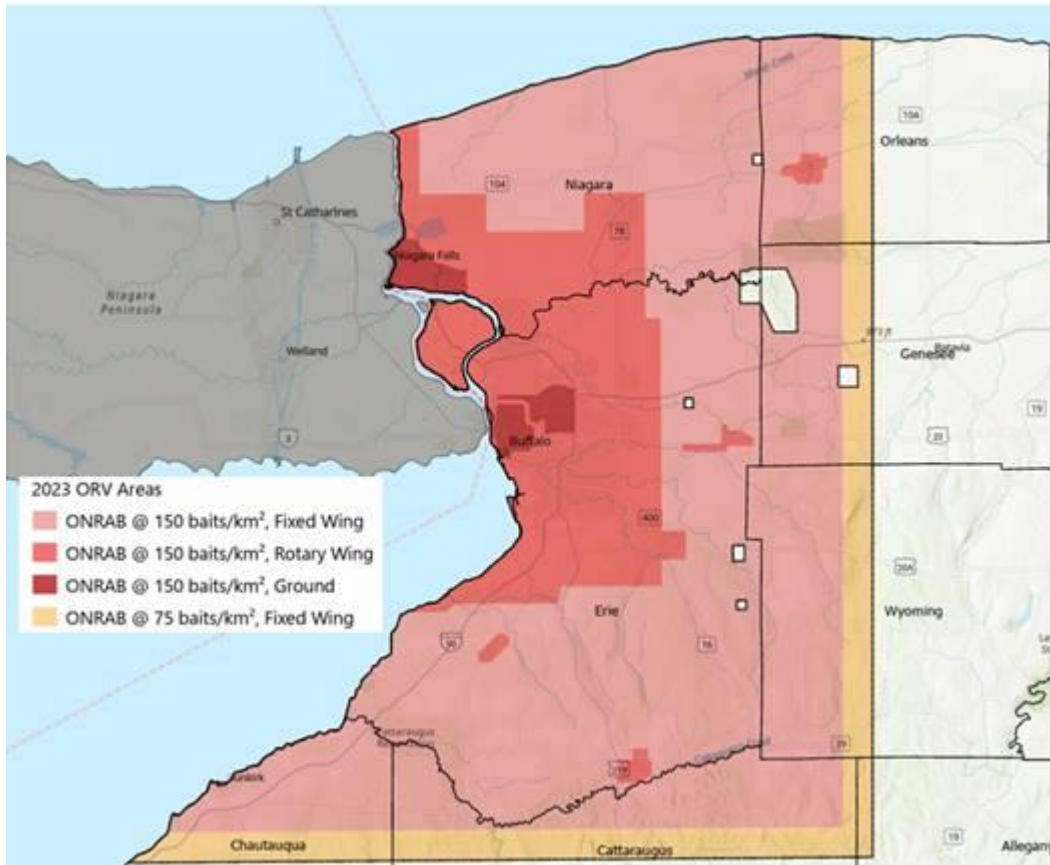


Image: Erie County map with areas shaded for fixed wing, helicopter and ground distribution

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[Erie County Department of Health \(ECDOH\) Rabies, Rodents, Arboviruses and Related Information](#)

[ECDOH - Wildlife Oral Rabies Vaccination \(ORV\) Program](#)

[New York State Department of Health, Rabies](#)

[USDA Oral Rabies Vaccine](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rabies](#)

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Kara Kane | Public Information Officer (Health)

Erie County | Health

95 Franklin Street, Buffalo, NY 14202

P: (716) 858-4941 | F: (716) 858-8701

Kara.Kane@erie.gov | erie.gov/health