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**NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Oral Rabies Vaccine Field Evaluation**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Oral Rabies Vaccine Field Evaluation in New York, July 26 – August 24, 2021

New York will once again be taking part in a nationally coordinated effort to halt the spread of raccoon rabies in 16 states. Ongoing field evaluation of a new oral rabies vaccine (ORV) called ONRAB will occur in Clinton, Essex counties in the Empire State as part of an evaluation that also includes parts of northern Vermont and New Hampshire. Additionally, evaluations will also occur in Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Jefferson, Lewis, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Orleans, Oswego, St. Lawrence, and Wyoming counties. These sites were selected in part because of ongoing collaborations with partners from the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario, Canada in the fight against rabies to protect human and animal health and reduce significant costs associated with living with rabies across broad geographic areas. Aerial and hand distribution of baits will take place in New York from July 26 – August 24, 2021.

Rabies is a serious public health concern because if left untreated it is invariably fatal. Costs associated with detection, prevention and control of rabies conservatively exceed \$500 million annually. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, greater than 90 percent of reported rabies cases in the United States are in wildlife. The cooperative USDA, APHIS, Wildlife Services, National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) was established in 1997 to prevent the further spread of wildlife rabies in the U.S. by containing and eventually eliminating the virus in terrestrial mammals. The majority of the NRMP efforts are focused on controlling raccoon rabies, which continues to account for most of the reported wildlife rabies cases in the U.S. Raccoon rabies occurs in all states east of the established ORV zone that extends from Maine to northeastern Ohio to central Alabama. Continued access to oral vaccine and bait options that are effective in all target wildlife species remains critical to long term success.

*“Healthy People in a Healthy Community”*

The Genesee Orleans County Health Departments (GCHD/OCHD) uses 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons.

**Health Alerts** convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from New York health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

**Health Advisories** provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

**Health Guidance** contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by GCHD/OCHD.

**Health Updates** provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

During 2011, the NRMP worked with other Federal, State, and local partners to conduct the first raccoon ORV field trial in the U.S. in over 20 years. This field trial was designed to test the safety and immunogenicity of the oral human adenovirus-rabies glycoprotein recombinant vaccine ONRAB (Artemis Technologies, Guelph, Ontario, Canada), which has been successfully integrated into comprehensive rabies control programs that resulted in elimination of raccoon rabies from Canada. Encouraging results from the U.S. trial in West Virginia represented a major milestone that led to expanded evaluations in 4 additional states (NH, NY, OH, and VT) during 2012-2020. In 2021, the use of ONRAB will further expand into two additional states (PA and TN). Data from these evaluations will support licensing of this vaccine for broader, more aggressive management of raccoon rabies by the NRMP and partners, with the goal of eliminating the variant of the rabies virus that cycles in raccoons.

The ONRAB bait consists of a polyvinyl chloride (PVC) blister pack, containing the vaccine. To make the baits attractive, the blister packs are coated with a sweet attractant that includes vegetable-based fats, wax, icing sugar, vegetable oil, artificial marshmallow flavor, and dark-green food-grade dye. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the bait. However, people who encounter baits directly are asked to leave them undisturbed. Should contact with bait occur, immediately rinse the area with warm water and soap and contact your local health department at 585-344-2580 ext. 5555 for Genesee County or 585-589-3278 for Orleans County. Please do not attempt to remove a bait from your dog’s mouth. The bait will not harm the dog. If you have additional questions related to the field evaluation in New York, please contact the Wildlife Services office in Rensselaer, NY at (518) 268-2289.

