



Press Release



Bristol Tennessee Police Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Capt. Glenn James

TITLE: Support Services Captain

PHONE NUMBER: 423-989-3453

EMAIL ADDRESS: gjames@bristoltn.org

USDA begins regional distribution of raccoon Oral Rabies Vaccine

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Wildlife Services agencies, in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and other state and federal agencies, are set to begin distributing Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) baits throughout the region in an effort to immunize wild raccoons against the virus, with a goal to stop the spread of raccoon variant rabies in Tennessee.

Beginning on Monday, September 25th, baits will be dropped in select areas of northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia by fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft. The ORV baits are composed of vaccine-filled plastic pouches coated with fish oil or contained in matchbox-sized fishmeal polymer blocks, both of which are strong attractants for raccoons. Raccoons that eat the bait become immune to rabies.

If any ORV baits are found, they should be left alone unless they are in a location frequented by children or pets. If a bait needs to be moved, it should be handled with gloves, paper towels, or a plastic bag. Intact baits should be tossed into a wooded area or other raccoon habitat, while damaged ones should be bagged and disposed of in the trash. If there is any chance that the bait has been ruptured, hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

If a pet finds and eats an ORV bait, owners should not attempt to remove the bait from their pet's mouth to avoid the risk of being bitten. Eating baits will not harm pets, though eating a large number of them may cause an upset stomach. If a person or pet comes into contact with the vaccine contained inside the bait, call the number printed on the bait, 877-722-6725, to report the bait contact. Most baits will be gone within 10 to 14 days after distribution. Distribution is expected to take approximately 4 weeks, depending upon weather conditions, concluding by October 25th.

For more information, contact Captain Glenn James, Bristol Tennessee Police Department, at 423-989-3453 or email gjames@bristoltn.org.