

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

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In 2023, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) will once again be conducting Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) bait distribution and trap-vaccinate-release (TVR) programs in Ontario. Baiting and TVR operations will begin June 19 and continue until the end of October. TVR operations in St. Catharines will begin May 1.

Please find attached:

- 1) Map of planned baiting area for 2023
- 2) Rabies Vaccine Bait Information Sheet

Per the attached map, rabies vaccine bait distribution will be conducted in rural areas with MNRF aircraft and by hand in urban areas by MNRF wildlife technicians. These are the details of bait distribution work in 2023 (dates are subject to change depending on weather conditions):

- Grey shaded areas will be completed with a combination of Twin Otter airplane and Eurocopter EC130 helicopter in mid-late August.
- Urban hand baiting, including the use of temporary bait stations, will occur in the brown shaded areas starting June 19 and continue through to the end of October.
- Live trapping and vaccinating wildlife (trap-vaccinate-release) will occur in the areas surrounding Hamilton, Niagara, St. Catharines and Welland shaded in yellow starting June 19 and will continue through to the end of October. TVR operations in St. Catharines will begin May 1.
- Preventative baiting of the purple shaded area in eastern Ontario will take place in mid August by Twin Otter airplane and will take one day to complete and hand baiting in the dark purple shaded area of the city of Cornwall will be completed in early August.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, MNRF may conduct localized rapid response baiting and trap-vaccinate-release measures, which would take place in the event of a raccoon or fox strain rabies case outside of the planned baiting area.

The ministry is committed to the research, surveillance, control and elimination of the outbreak of rabies in southwestern Ontario to prevent the disease from spreading. Since the start of the rabies outbreak in 2015, the first of its kind in over a decade, MNRF has taken quick action to protect communities, distributing over 8.2 million vaccine baits by air and ground. Rabies cases have decreased by 90% since 2016.

In keeping with current World Health Organization guidelines, the 2023 rabies control zone has been reduced as some areas have had no reported cases in over two years. The control zone encompasses an area within approximately 50 km of positive cases that are less than two years old (positive cases since July 1, 2021).

Any warm-blooded mammal can contract rabies. If a human contracts rabies and does not receive treatment, the disease is fatal.

The khaki-green coloured bait being distributed by hand and by aircraft is made of wax-fat with an attractant flavour (vanilla-sugar). A label with a toll-free telephone number (1-888-574-6656) and the message "Do not eat" is located on the exterior of the bait, and a plastic package containing the liquid rabies vaccine is embedded in the centre. If found, the bait should not be touched, but left for raccoons, skunks and foxes to consume. (See attached bait identification hand out for detailed description.)

Ontario's rabies vaccine baits have been tested to ensure they are safe for wildlife, people, and pets. However, eating a vaccine bait does not replace the regular rabies vaccination provided by a veterinarian for pets. If a pet has eaten a bait and the owner is concerned, they should contact their vet as a precaution.

Ontario's rabies control program is a joint effort that receives important input and contributions from a variety of partners across the province. Partnerships with provincial ministries, federal agencies, regional health units, municipalities, wildlife rehabilitators, licensed trappers, wildlife control agents and Indigenous communities are all key to the continued success of Ontario's rabies control program.

For further information about rabies in Ontario, please visit [Ontario.ca/rabies](https://ontario.ca/rabies) or contact the ministry's rabies information line at 1-888-574-6656.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the information provided, please contact me at 705-313-2043 or by email at Larissa.Nituch@ontario.ca.

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