

August 6, 2018

Dear Colleague:

In August, the Vermont Department of Health will work in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services (WS) to conduct an oral rabies vaccine (ORV) field project in Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grande Isle, Lamoille, Orleans and Washington counties in Vermont and parts of Coos and Grafton counties in New Hampshire. Cooperative programs to distribute ORV baits in Vermont have occurred since 1997 and these operations have been conducted annually to control the spread of rabies in raccoons, foxes and coyotes.

The Vermont ORV project is part of a nationally coordinated effort among public health officials, veterinarians and wildlife biologists and is designed to prevent the further spread of raccoon rabies north along the border with Canada. Rabies vaccine bait will be dropped from low-flying aircraft in rural areas and placed by hand in residential areas. Once begun, the aerial distribution will take about five days and hand placement up to a week, depending on weather conditions. In addition, a scientific evaluation will again be conducted in Vermont and New York to measure the immunogenicity of a relatively new vaccine called ONRAB, which was developed by Artemis Technologies in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. This oral rabies vaccine is a live recombinant human adenovirus (serotype 5)-rabies glycoprotein vaccine targeting wild raccoons and skunks that is being field tested in Vermont and adjacent states. ONRAB uses a human adenovirus type 5 (HAd5) as a vector to express the rabies virus glycoprotein gene. It has been used extensively in Canada, with more than 6 million doses safely distributed since 2007 to control rabies in raccoons and skunks.

ONRAB has performed well in ORV campaigns to eliminate raccoon rabies in Canada and has shown promising results in U.S. field trials conducted by WS in New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Vermont and West Virginia. We expect no adverse health effects for people (including children) or pets that may come into contact with the bait and vaccine. No adverse impacts to humans or animals have been reported from Canada or the U.S. associated with ONRAB field operations. However, as always, we are advising people not to touch the bait. If baits need to be moved for any reason, the use of gloves is recommended. The manufacturer has printed a U.S. toll-free phone number on the bait, so that anyone finding the bait can call for more information.

Enclosed is a fact sheet about the bait drop and the field trial. If you have any questions about an individual patient or pet exposure, call the Epidemiology Program at (802) 863-7240 or (800) 640-4374.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Levine, MD  
Commissioner of Health

