



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
Michelle Morse, MD, MPH  
Acting Health Commissioner

## 2025 Veterinary Alert #5

### Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) Baits Vaccinating Raccoons in Queens and Brooklyn

- The New York City Health Department, in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, is vaccinating raccoons by distributing oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits in targeted areas of Queens and Brooklyn during the last two weeks of April.
- While ORV is typically done in the fall, spring baiting is being done in response to a growing number of rabid raccoons in Queens and Brooklyn (see [Rabies Maps](#)) and ongoing reports of rabid raccoons in Nassau and Suffolk counties.
- ORV is done using the Raboral V-RG™ bait, which contains a liquid vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein (V-RG) recombinant virus vaccine; it does not contain the rabies virus. The baits are generally not harmful to dogs or cats, but a pet may vomit after eating a large number of them.
- Veterinarians should be prepared to answer questions from pet owners regarding ORV in NYC.

*Please share with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff.*

April 25, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Since fall of 2024, a growing number of rabid raccoons have been detected in previously affected areas of Queens and Brooklyn and new areas of southern Brooklyn (see [Rabies Maps](#)). To date this year, 11 raccoons (6 from Queens, 2 from Brooklyn, and 3 from Staten Island) have tested positive for rabies in New York City. In addition, rabid raccoons continue to be identified in neighboring Nassau and Suffolk counties. [Nassau County](#) also plans to distribute ORV within the same timeframe.

Targeted spring baiting is intended to interrupt ongoing transmission among raccoons in the affected areas and follows a yearlong citywide pause in 2024 during which no ORV baiting was done. Baiting was conducted in response to a cluster of rabid raccoons in the same areas of Queens during 2022 and 2023, resulting in a dramatic decline in rabies activity. There are plans to resume annual citywide ORV baiting this fall. Spring baiting during the last two weeks of April, followed by fall baiting will help maximize the number of vaccinated raccoons to help disrupt transmission, and prevent spill over into other wildlife, domestic animals, and people.

ORV has routinely been used as a strategy to control rabies among raccoons as a part of annual vaccination efforts and in response to rabies cluster events. The NYC Health Department, in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture, Cornell University, and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, began an ORV program to vaccinate raccoons in NYC in 2014. Baiting has occurred every year (except 2019 and 2024) in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island, with Manhattan added in 2020.

ORV in NYC is done using the Raboral V-RG™ bait, which contains a liquid vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein (V-RG) recombinant virus vaccine and is coated in brown, fish-scented attractant. The baits are generally not harmful to people, pets, or wildlife, and **it is not possible to contract rabies from the vaccine**. The baits are distributed by hand and strategically placed in several parks and wooded sections of Brooklyn and Queens.

The baits are not harmful to dogs or cats, but a pet may vomit if they consume a large number of baits. In the event a pet encounters a bait, **pet owners should not attempt to remove the bait from the animal's mouth to avoid being bitten and to avoid touching damaged bait**. It is not harmful for people to touch an intact bait; however, because of the offensive odor, gloves are recommended. There is a very low risk of human infection with the vaccinia virus after contact with the pink liquid vaccine. However, **people who handle damaged bait should wear gloves or use a plastic bag**. Damaged baits can be bagged and disposed of in regular trash. People who have direct skin contact, particularly with the pink liquid vaccine inside the bait, should wash the affected skin with soap and water and call the Poison Control Center at 212-764-7667 (212-POISONS). Exposure may cause skin lesions similar to those caused by smallpox vaccination.

Veterinarians in New York City should be prepared to answer questions from pet owners regarding ORV.

#### **VETERINARIANS MAY ADVISE CLIENTS AS FOLLOWS:**

- It is not possible for a person or pet to get rabies from the vaccine because the vaccine does not contain the rabies virus; however, it does contain attenuated vaccinia virus.
- It is not harmful for people to touch an intact bait, but gloves are highly recommended.
- Anyone who has direct skin contact with the pink liquid vaccine should immediately wash the affected skin with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and call the Poison Control Center at 212-764-7667 (212-POISONS).
- The bait packets have a strong fishmeal smell that is not attractive to people or most other animals.
- A label clearly identifies each bait packet that reads: "Rabies Vaccine Live Vaccinia Vector. Do Not Disturb" and a toll-free number, 877-722-6725; callers will be routed to the Poison Control Center.
- Bait found near residences or in parks, but not in the open, should be left alone; baits out in the open where pets or children are more likely to encounter them should be thrown into

deeper cover under trees or bushes while wearing gloves or using a plastic bag; dispose of damaged baits in regular trash.

- The baits are generally not harmful to dogs, cats, or other pets, but a pet may vomit if they consume a large number of baits. **Do not try to remove a packet from an animal's mouth to avoid being bitten or contact with the liquid inside the bait.**

**FOR INFORMATION REGARDING RABIES AND BAITING, VISIT:**

- New York City Health Department: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/rabies.page>
- New York State Department of Health: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies>

To view prior Veterinary Alerts, including [2025 Veterinary Advisory #4](#) on Rabies Surveillance, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/resources/zoonotic-vectorborne-publications.page>

As always, we greatly appreciate your partnership and cooperation.

*Elizabeth Howell; Asha Abdool, MPH, Renee King, MPH, Kevin Lovingood, MPH, Ryan MacDonald, MPH, Christina Ng, MPH, Marc Paladini, MPH, Stephanea Roeser, MPH, Sally Slavinski, DVM, MPH, DACVPM*

Zoonotic and Vector Borne Disease Unit,  
Bureau of Communicable Disease,  
[ZIVDU@health.nyc.gov](mailto:ZIVDU@health.nyc.gov)  
347-396-2600

*-Mario Merlino, Norma Torres*  
Bureau of Veterinary and Pest Control Services  
Division of Environmental Health

Visit our webpage for information and resources for veterinarians: [Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases: Information for Providers](#). If you do not receive these alerts via email and would like to be added to the distribution list, email [zivdu@health.nyc.gov](mailto:zivdu@health.nyc.gov)

Report animal diseases to the NYC Health Department:

- Online through a [secure web-based reporting platform](#)
- Call 347-396-2600
- Fax the [Animal Disease Case Report](#) form to 347-396-2753

**Report upon suspicion:** Anthrax, brucellosis, glanders, influenza (novel with pandemic potential), mpox, plague, Q fever, SARS, tularemia. For rabies, call the Animal Bite Unit (646-364-1799) to report suspect rabid animals or for assistance with pets exposed to rabies.

**Report upon laboratory diagnosis:** Arboviral encephalitides, carbapenem-resistant organism (CRO), leptospirosis, psittacosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, salmonellosis, tuberculosis

**Report within 24 hours any outbreak or suspected outbreak of any disease, condition, or syndrome, of known or unknown etiology, which may pose a danger to public health.**