



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Alister F. Martin, MD, MPP
Commissioner

2026 Veterinary Alert #6

Three Rabid Raccoons Detected in Astoria, Queens

Please share with your colleagues in veterinary medicine and your staff.

Key Information

- Three rabid raccoons were found in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens in June and July 2026, an area where rabid raccoons have historically been rare.
- For current information on rabies and a map of animals that have tested positive in NYC, visit nyc.gov/health/rabies.
- Raccoon oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits will be distributed in targeted areas of Queens starting in the next 2 weeks, weather permitting, to vaccinate raccoons and interrupt ongoing transmission.
- Veterinarians should ensure that their clients' pets are current on rabies vaccination and educate pet owners regarding rabies prevention.
- Veterinarians should consider rabies in the differential diagnosis for any patient with a history of exposure to a potentially rabid wild or feral animal, a bite wound of unknown origin, recent importation, or if presenting with progressive neurologic disease.

August 6, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Three rabid raccoons have been detected in Astoria, Queens since June 2026 (see [Rabies Map](#)). The sick raccoons tested positive for rabies at the NYC Public Health Laboratory: one on June 15 and two on July 7. There were no known human or pet exposures. Rabid raccoons are rarely reported in northwest Queens, with one raccoon detected each in year 2007, 2009, and 2020.

To date this year, 20 animals have [tested positive for rabies in New York City](#) (6 raccoons and 1 skunk from Queens; 9 raccoons from Staten Island; 4 raccoons from Brooklyn). The NYC Health Department, in coordination with the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, will conduct oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baiting in targeted areas of Queens starting in the next 2 weeks, weather permitting.

Background

ORV is intended to disrupt ongoing transmission among raccoons in the affected areas and prevent spillover into other wildlife, domestic animals, and people. The ORV program has routinely been used as a strategy to control rabies among raccoons as a part of annual vaccination efforts since 2014 and in response to rabies cluster events.

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 distributed by hand and strategically placed in areas with suitable raccoon habitat. There is a very low risk of human infection with the vaccinia virus after contact with the pink liquid vaccine. Exposure may cause skin lesions similar to those caused by smallpox vaccination. People should wear gloves or use a plastic bag to handle bait.

Veterinarians in New York City should be prepared to answer questions from pet owners regarding ORV. Ensure your clients' pets are current on rabies vaccination. Consider rabies in the differential diagnosis for any patient with a history of exposure to a potentially rabid wild or feral animal, a bite wound of unknown origin, recent importation, or if presenting with progressive neurologic disease. For additional information regarding rabies vaccination requirements and guidance for reporting and arranging animal rabies testing, see the [2026 Veterinary Advisory #1: Annual Rabies Summary, 2025](#).

Guidance for Clients

- 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 includes a phone number, 877-722-6725; callers will be routed to the Poison Control Center.
- Baits 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.
- Baits are generally not harmful to dogs, cats, or other pets, but a pet may vomit if they consume many bait packets. **Do not try to remove a packet from an animal's mouth to avoid being bitten and to avoid contact with the liquid inside the bait.**

Additional Resources

For information regarding rabies and ORV baiting, visit

- [Rabies - NYC Health](#)
- [2026 Veterinary Advisory #1: Annual Rabies Summary 2025](#)

- [Oral Rabies Vaccination | USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#)
- [Zoonotic and Vector-borne Provider Publications - NYC Health](#)

As always, we appreciate your continued collaboration with our efforts to monitor public health issues in New York City.

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Visit our webpage: [Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases: Information for Providers](#)

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Report animal diseases to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:

- 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, rabies, SARS, tularemia

Report upon laboratory diagnosis: Arboviral encephalitides, 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.