



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

2026 Veterinary Alert #9

Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) Baits to be Distributed in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island to Vaccinate Raccoons to Prevent Rabies

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

Background

- [Raccoon rabies](#) has been circulating among raccoons in New York City since 1992. To date in 2026, 29 animals have tested positive for rabies.
- Starting October 5, 2026, the New York City (NYC) Health Department, in coordination with United States Department of Agriculture and NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, is vaccinating raccoons by distributing oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits in areas of Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.

For Veterinarians

- ORV will be done using the Raboral V-RG™ bait, which contains a liquid vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein (V-RG) recombinant virus vaccine; it does not contain rabies virus.
- ORV baits are not harmful to dogs or cats. Consumption of many baits may cause vomiting.

October 2, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

The raccoon variant of the [rabies virus](#) has been present in NYC since 1992. This variant is most efficiently transmitted among raccoons with occasional spillover to other animals, usually skunks and cats. To date this year, 29 animals have tested positive for rabies: 7 in Queens (1 skunk, 6 raccoons), 6 in Brooklyn (raccoons), 14 in Staten Island (3 skunks, 11 raccoons), and 2 in the Bronx (1 skunk, 1 raccoon) (see [Rabies Webpage](#)). This number of positive rabid animals so far in 2026 is more than the 22 detected in all of 2025, but is consistent with recent years, including 31 in 2022.

Oral rabies vaccination (ORV) has routinely been used as a strategy to control rabies among raccoons. The NYC Health Department, in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Cornell University, and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation began ORV in NYC in 2014.

Starting October 5, 2026, ORV baits will be distributed by hand-tossing and using fixed bait stations strategically placed in several parks and wooded sections of Brooklyn and Queens. A low-flying helicopter will be used to distribute baits over several parks, wooded areas, and less-populated sections of Staten Island. Baiting will be completed by the end of October.

Background

ORV is done using the Raboral V-RG™ bait, which contains a pink liquid vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein (V-RG) recombinant virus vaccine; it does not contain rabies virus. Each liquid vaccine dose is contained within a small packet and coated with a fishmeal attractant. Raccoons are attracted to the scented bait and are immunized while eating the bait.

It is not possible for a person or pet to get rabies from ORV baits because the vaccine does not contain the rabies virus; however, it contains attenuated vaccinia virus. While it is not harmful for persons to touch an intact bait, there is a very low risk of human infection with the vaccinia virus after contact with the liquid vaccine. Exposure may cause skin lesions like those caused by smallpox vaccination. People should wear gloves or use a plastic bag when handling damaged baits. Damaged baits can be bagged and disposed of in regular trash. Persons who have direct skin contact, particularly with the pink liquid vaccine inside the bait, should wash the area with soap and water and call the Poison Control Center at 212-764-7667 (212-POISONS).



Figure 1. Image of ORV bait packets covered in fishmeal

Despite the millions of ORV doses distributed across the United States, there have only been two documented cases of human infection with vaccinia virus due to exposure to ORV, both of whom were exposed to liquid vaccine while attempting to take bait away from their dogs (one was bitten).^{1,2} People at risk of vaccinia infection are those who have atopic dermatitis or other active exfoliative skin conditions and those with immune deficiencies or immunosuppressive conditions.

For Veterinarians

ORV baits are generally not harmful to dogs, cats, or other pets. Pets that consume many baits may experience temporary gastrointestinal distress such as vomiting and diarrhea, but there are no long-term health risks.

Veterinarians should advise clients:

- It is not harmful to touch intact bait, but gloves are highly recommended.
- After direct skin contact with the pink liquid vaccine, 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).
- Each bait packet is labeled “Rabies Vaccine Live Vaccinia Vector. Do Not Disturb” and has a strong fishmeal smell.

- Baits found under vegetation or wooded areas should be left alone. Baits found in the open, in high-traffic areas where pets or children are likely to be exposed, should be moved into deeper vegetation, such as under trees or bushes, while wearing gloves or using a plastic bag (e.g., doggy waste bag). Damaged baits should be disposed of in regular trash.
- **Do not try to remove a packet from an animal's mouth to avoid being bitten and to avoid contact with the liquid vaccine.**
- Ensure pets are current on rabies vaccination.

Additional Resources

View additional information regarding rabies and ORV baiting, including NYC summary data at nyc.gov/health/rabies.

- [Veterinary Advisory #1 Annual Rabies Summary 2025](#)
 - [USDA APHIS | Oral Rabies Vaccination](#)
 - [NYS DOH | Rabies: What to Know](#)
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As always, we appreciate your continued collaboration with our efforts to monitor public health issues in New York City.

Sincerely,

Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Disease Unit*
Bureau of Communicable Disease
ZIVDU@health.nyc.gov
347-396-2600

Bureau of Veterinary and Pest Control Services**
Division of Environmental Health

* Asha Abdool, MPH; Maya Hajny Fernandez, MPH; Renee King, MPH; Kevin Lovingood, MPH; Ryan MacDonald, MPH; Marc Paladini, MPH; Christina Ng, MPH; Sally Slavinski, DVM, MPH, DACVPM

** Mario Merlino, Norma Torres, Dawn Carcaterra

References

1. Rupprecht CE, Blass L, Orciari LA, et al. Human infection due to recombinant vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein virus. *N Engl J Med*. 2001 Aug 23;345(8):582-6.
2. Human vaccinia infection after contact with a raccoon rabies vaccine bait—Pennsylvania, 2009. *MMWR* 2009; 58:1204–7.

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

If you do not receive these alerts and would like to be added to the distribution list, email zivdu@health.nyc.gov

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, SARS, tularemia

For rabies, call the Animal Bite Unit at 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.