

Look up in the sky – Rabies vaccine bait airdrop coming to Erie County

USDA program delivers oral rabies vaccine for wildlife by airplane from August 12-17 and by helicopter from August 17-21; Erie County vector control staff will distribute on the ground starting August 17

ERIE COUNTY, NY – Look up in the sky from August 12-21, 2024 in Erie County, and you might see low-flying planes or helicopters in your neighborhood, part of a nationwide effort to protect wildlife against rabies, a disease that is 100% fatal to animals and humans.

- Fixed-wing aircraft will drop oral rabies vaccine bait over wide sections of Erie County’s rural and suburban towns from August 12-17. Parts of western Orleans, Genesee and Wyoming counties, and northern Chautauqua and Cattaraugus counties, will be included.
- Helicopters will drop bait over central and northwestern Erie County and some villages from August 17-21.
- Airdrop dates are weather dependent.
- Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) vector control staff will distribute bait by hand starting August 17 in urban and more densely populated parts of the county. This schedule is weather-dependent.

“This oral rabies vaccine is intended for raccoons, foxes and coyotes and to give them protection against rabies infection,” **said Deputy Director of Environmental Health Peter Tripi, who manages the county’s Vector Control Program.** “This program reduces the risk of rabies transmission when wildlife comes in contact with humans or domestic animals like dogs and cats.”

The oral rabies vaccine bait is contained in small green packets about the size of a quarter coin. To make the bait attractive to wildlife, the vaccine packets are coated with a sweet attractant that includes vegetable-based fats, wax, icing sugar, vegetable oil, artificial marshmallow flavor, and dark-green food-grade dye.

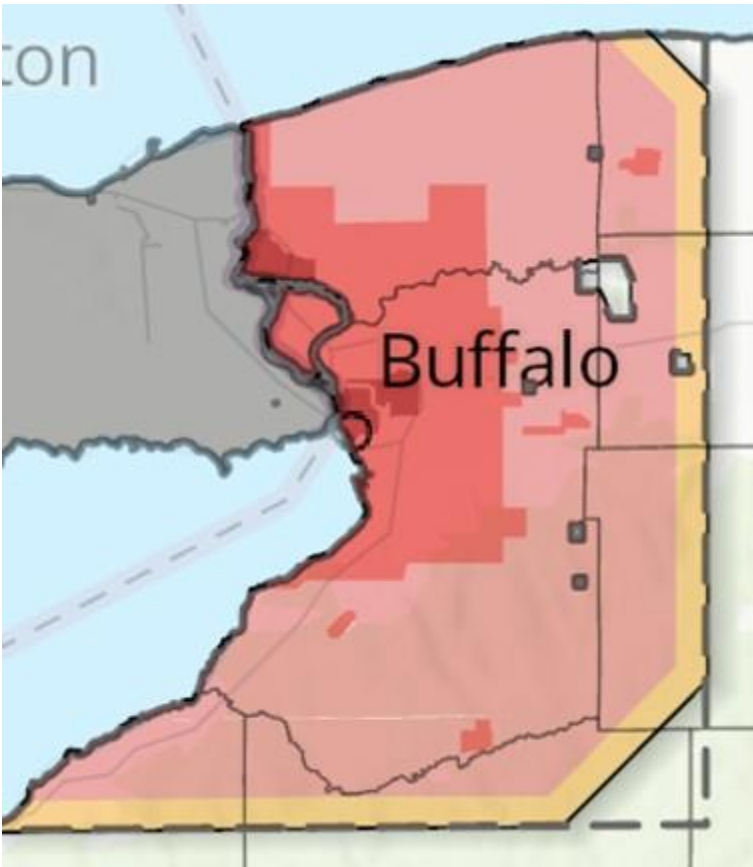
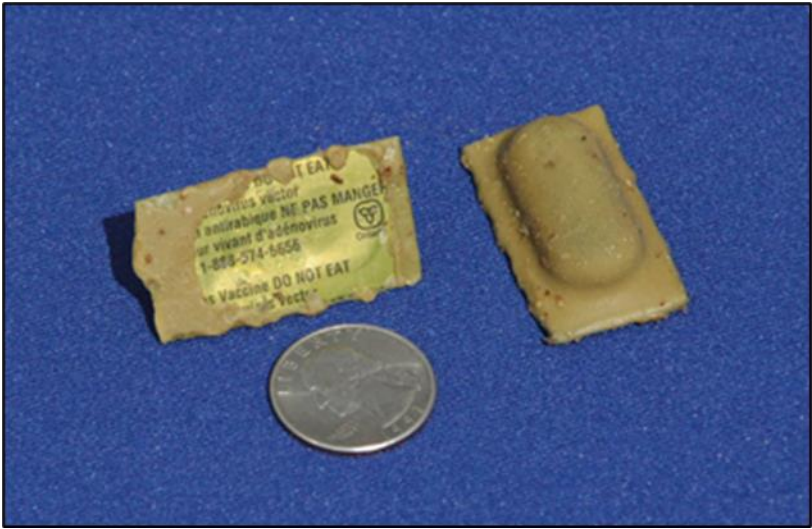
“Pet owners should see this as a reminder to keep their dogs, cats and ferrets vaccinated against rabies,” **continued Tripi.** “Rabies infection means certain, painful death for humans and pets. We have a responsibility to protect public health and pet health with rabies vaccines. Check with your veterinarian, and know that ECDOH will have two free rabies vaccine clinics scheduled for September.”

Residents who come in contact with wildlife vaccine packets can call the NYSDOH Rabies Information Line (888) 574-6656 with questions or concerns.

- Do NOT disturb vaccine packets. Most packets are eaten within four days; almost all baits will be gone within a week. If packets are not found and eaten, they will harmlessly dissolve and exposed vaccine will become inactivated. If you must move a vaccine packet, wear gloves or use a plastic bag or paper towel to pick it up. Place any damaged baits in the trash; throw intact baits into a wooded area or other raccoon/wildlife habitat.
- Residents should WASH HANDS IMMEDIATELY if they come into direct contact with the vaccine or packets, then call the NYSDOH Rabies Information Line at (888) 574-6656.

Additional recommendations include:

- Supervise children’s outdoor activities during bait distribution and for one week afterward.
- Confine dogs and cats indoors and observe leash laws during the bait distribution interval and for one week afterward. This will increase the probability of raccoon vaccination and decrease the chance of pets finding the baits.
- Baits and vaccines are not harmful to domestic animals. However, an animal may vomit if it consumes several baits. Contact a veterinarian if your pet has consumed vaccine baits.
- Residents should not risk being bitten while trying to remove bait from your pet’s mouth.
- Keep your dogs, cats and ferrets up to date with rabies vaccines.



- ONRAB @ 150 baits/km², Fixed Wing
- ONRAB @ 150 baits/km², Rotary Wing
- ONRAB @ 150 baits/km², Ground
- ONRAB @ 75 baits/km², Fixed Wing

[National Rabies Management Program Overview | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/nrm)
Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) Rabies, Rodents, Arboviruses and Related Information:
<https://www3.erie.gov/health/rabies-rodents-vectors-arboviruses-and-related-information>
New York State Department of Health, Rabies: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies>
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rabies: <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies>

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